

# **Partnership Agreement for Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership**

## **The Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP)**

- 1) This Partnership Agreement sets out the agreed principles and practises in ecclesial matters of the Local Ecumenical Partnership approved for the Area of Benefit by the Relevant Authority of each of the Participating Denominations and established as a charitable incorporated organisation called Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership (“the LEP”) and looks to the Participating Denominations for support, encouragement and advice.
- 2) The LEP will be conducted in accordance with the constitution of the LEP and this Partnership Agreement.
- 3) All definitions have the same meaning in this Partnership Agreement as in the constitution of the LEP.

## **The Area of Benefit**

- 4) The Area of Benefit is the northeast sector of Milton Keynes, an area co-terminus with the Church of England Parish of Stantonbury and Willen.

## **The Partners**

- 5) The Participating Denominations are:
  - a. The Church of England;
  - b. The Methodist Church of Great Britain;
  - c. The United Reformed Church;
  - d. The Baptist Union.
- 6) The Participating local Churches are:
  - a) the Church of England Parish of Stantonbury and Willen;
  - b) the Milton Keynes Methodist Circuit;
  - c) the Stantonbury Baptist Church;
  - d) the Stantonbury United Reformed Church.
- 7) The Relevant Authority for each Participating Denomination is:
  - a. For the Church of England Parish of Stantonbury and Willen: The Diocese of Oxford; and
  - b. For Milton Keynes Methodist Circuit: The Northampton District of the Methodists; and
  - c. For Stantonbury United Reformed Church: East Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church; and
  - d. For Stantonbury Baptist Church: the authority of a decision of the Stantonbury Baptist Church Members’ Meeting, ratified by the Faith and Society Team of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

## **Christian Initiation and Belonging**

- 8) Baptism shall be administered according to a rite and/or practice authorised by any of the Participating Denominations and shall be set, in normal circumstances, within an act of congregational worship. A register of baptisms shall be kept.
- 9) All persons enquiring about baptism should proceed with the full knowledge of the options that are available to them according to each of the Participating Denominations.
- 10) Preparation for baptism upon profession of faith, for confirmation, and for admission to the full responsibilities and privileges of being a member and/or communicant of a Participating Church shall include specific denominational teaching and instruction.
- 11) The relevant authorities of each of the Participating Denominations may give approval for joint confirmation, which shall normally be administered at a joint act of worship according to a rite approved by the ministers of confirmation.
- 12) Baptismal policy and practice shall be consistent with the discipline of the Participating Denominations and Churches.

Baptism upon profession of faith will not normally be administered to those who have previously been baptized at an age when they were too young to answer for themselves. All who enquire about baptism having been baptized at an age when they were too young to answer for themselves, shall be made aware of alternative options, including a service of re-affirmation of baptismal faith, and, if not already confirmed, confirmation. If the person holds a strong conviction about being baptized in these circumstances, the matter should be referred to the ministry team and the relevant authorities of the Participating Denominations for consideration in the light of nationally agreed policies. Anyone so baptized shall be eligible for membership of the LEP as a Baptist only.

- 13) Those who are baptized on profession of faith and/or confirmed shall be received, as appropriate, into membership of:
  1. the Baptist Church
  2. the Methodist Church
  3. the United Reformed Churchin accordance with normal denominational procedures.
  4. They shall receive communicant status in the Church of England.

- 14) A register of members of the LEP and their denominational affiliation(s) shall be maintained.
- 15) Membership discipline shall be in accordance with the procedures of the Participating Denominations. Members of more than one of the Participating Denominations shall be subject to the general discipline of only one of them.
- 16) In the case of a formal disciplinary procedure, members of more than one of the Participating Denominations shall follow the procedure of only one of them, as agreed by the relevant authorities of the Participating Denominations on the proposal of the Trustees of the LEP. The standing of any such member with the other Participating Denomination(s) of which they are a member shall be reviewed by them in the light of the outcome of that procedure.

## **Worship**

- 17) Worship shall safeguard and present the doctrines, practices, traditions and developing traditions of each of the Participating Denominations. A balanced and varied pattern of worship shall be aimed for in order to maximise the experience of the LEP of the riches of each tradition and to enable the congregation to explore and express its ecumenical life and aspiration, while at the same time ensuring that worship is accessible and sustaining for all its members. Ordained ministers or other duly authorised persons shall be eligible to preside at the Eucharist as permitted by the rules of the relevant Participating Denomination. All those recognised as communicants by the Participating Denominations may receive the sacrament.
- 18) The authorisations of each Participating Denomination apply to that denomination's services.
- 19) In arranging services encouragement shall be given to the participation of the whole congregation, Lay/Local Preachers, Readers, Elders, and others available to the LEP authorised as leaders of worship or as preachers.

## **Ministry**

- 20) The procedures of the relevant Participating Denominations shall be followed in the appointment/call of ministers. Recognising, however, the importance of continuity, the LEP expects that those responsible for the appointment/call of ministers shall select persons who will respect and develop the ecumenical character of the LEP. To that end, when it is expected that an Appointed Minister may leave, or before any major changes in the responsibility of an Appointed Minister are considered, or if additional Appointed Ministers are being contemplated, a procedure agreed by the Participating Denominations in consultation with each other shall be followed. Where possible, ministry should be provided by a variety of Participating Denominations, either concurrently or in sequence.
- 21) Good practice shall be for Appointed Ministers, in collaboration with others, to ensure that the traditions of the Participating Denominations are represented and honoured.
- 22) Newly Appointed Ministers shall be inducted / welcomed at a service at which the Ecumenical Vision Statement is reaffirmed.
- 23) All Appointed Ministers shall seek or be offered appropriate status within all the Participating Denominations.
- 24) Discipline of Appointed Ministers shall follow the practice of the Ministers' Participating Denomination.
- 25) Remuneration of Appointed Ministers shall be in accordance with the practices of the appointing Participating Denomination.

## **Safeguarding**

- 26) The trustees will ensure that there are appropriate and adequate arrangements for safeguarding within the LEP. They must agree which Participating Denomination's safeguarding policy and

procedures they will adopt provided that the safeguarding policy and procedures so adopted must be acceptable to all the Participating Denominations.

- 27) The LEP's safeguarding policy and procedures (and any subsequent amendments thereto) must be ratified by the Relevant Authority of each Participating Denomination. A copy of the ratified policy (including any amendments thereto) must be sent to the safeguarding adviser nominated by the Relevant Authority for each Participating Denomination.
- 28) All Serious Incidents must be reported to the Charity Commission.

### **Relationship with the Participating Denominations**

- 29) The LEP shall maintain proper reciprocal relationships with the appropriate local and regional bodies of the Participating Denominations, as set out in denominational legislation and guidelines, which shall include pastoral care and oversight, and shall fulfil necessary constitutional requirements.
- 30) Due regard shall be taken to balance the multiple denominational expectations so as not to overburden the LEP and its personnel.
- 31) Meetings of the members of a particular Participating Church may be held in order to meet the requirements of the Participating Church concerned, as directed by guidance published from time to time by the relevant Participating Denomination.

### **Buildings**

- 32) The Participating Denominations will enter into such Sharing Agreements as may be required by the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 in relation to any premises to be used by the LEP.

### **Ongoing development**

- 33) Other churches in or near the Area of Benefit may seek participation in the LEP at any time, subject to the agreement of the appropriate authorities of the Participating Churches and the Participating Denominations.
- 34) The LEP looks for the support of the Participating Denominations to develop its work and witness.

### **Contradiction**

- 35) Should any contradiction arise between the requirements in the LEP's Constitution and this Partnership Agreement, the requirements of the LEP's Constitution take precedence.

February 2022