

Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership

Six thriving and growing churches, making Christ known in our area of Milton Keynes.



November 2024 Newsletter

Welcome to the November edition of the Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership Newsletter, (also see website at www.stantonbury.net).

Partnership News

24th October 2024

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we reflect on the journey we have shared over the past few months, I want to begin by thanking you all for your openness and for the warm responses to our first pastoral letter. I have been greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm many of you have shown, even as we consider some necessary changes in our life as a community, particularly the proposed adjustments to service times. I understand that this has sparked mixed feelings for some, and I want to assure you that I hear your concerns. I truly believe that, in time, as we continue to worship together, God will guide us in ways that allow every congregation to flourish.

In the spirit of thanksgiving, we continue to rejoice in the many blessings we have **celebrated during our Harvest services across the churches. As Psalm 65:9-13 reminds us, “You visit the earth and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.”** It has been a privilege to witness how, just as God provides for the earth, He provides for us as His people. May we carry this spirit of gratitude into the rest of the year, trusting in God’s faithful provision in every season of our lives.

As we move into November, our hearts turn towards reflection and remembrance. This is a time in the church calendar when we pause to reflect **on the saints who have gone before us, the lives of those we’ve lost, and the sacrifices made by many for our freedom.**

We will begin November by commemorating *All Saints’ Day* (1st November), a day that calls us to reflect on the lives of the faithful who have lived out their witness to Christ. As the book of Revelation reminds us, **“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat”** (Revelation 7:16). We remember that those who have gone before us now rest in the presence of God.

Shortly after, we will mark *All Souls’ Day* (2nd November), a time to remember and pray for our own loved ones who have passed away. Many find comfort in this service as we honour their memory and entrust them into God’s loving care. We are reminded

in John 14:2-3, where Jesus says, ***“In my Father’s house are many rooms... I am going there to prepare a place for you.”*** Let us take solace in the promise of eternal life as we bring to mind those we miss dearly.

We then move towards *Remembrance Sunday* (10th November), a service that holds deep significance for many. It is a time when we honour the courage, sacrifice, and dedication of all who have served in the armed forces and those who continue to protect us today. As we gather to pray for peace in our world, we reflect on the words of Jesus in John 15:13: ***“Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”*** Let this service be an opportunity to renew our commitment to living as peacemakers in our own communities and in the wider world.

As November progresses, we begin preparing our hearts for *Advent*, which starts on the 1st of December. Advent is a season of waiting and anticipation as we look forward to celebrating the birth of Christ at Christmas and reflect on His second coming. The last Sunday in November is often a time to focus on the theme of hope, remembering that God’s promises are faithful and true. Romans 15:13 reminds us, ***“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”***

During this special month, I encourage you to engage fully in these services. Each one offers a unique opportunity to deepen our faith, to remember God’s faithfulness, and to gather in fellowship as the Body of Christ.

I invite you to bring your family and friends, and let us make our churches vibrant places of worship and reflection. God is with us through it all. He promises in Matthew 18:20, ***“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”*** We are not alone; His presence is with us in every act of worship, in every prayer, and in every service we attend.

Finally, I ask that you continue to pray for one another, for our churches, and for our shared mission as we head into this new season. May we seek God’s guidance together, confident in His love and provision.

Yours in Christ’s service,
Revd. Canon Chi Okpala
Team Rector and Team Leader

Partnership wide services 2025 for your diaries

The 5th Sundays next year are March 30th, June 29th, August 31st and November 30th.

House for duty Anglican minister

Thank you to Revd Canon Chi for stepping forward and updating our Parish Profile to entice people to apply for our House for Duty Minister post. We are working closely with the Oxford Diocese to hopefully have someone in post, and occupy the house at St Andrew’s, by next Easter.

Mission, Evangelism, Discipleship and Worship Committee

This exciting new venture will be led by Revd Phil Dunning and is expected to involve all our clergy, to help us to grow more Christ like, as in the vision for SEP.

Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership Council

Below is the statement I wrote in October's Newsletter

At Council meeting last week, all SEPC Reps were asked to go back to their congregations and chat about the possibility of changing their Sunday Service start times, so that our energetic Ministers could preach at two churches each Sunday, as Chi and Phil suggest. Both of them are also available on 29 December for Sunday services. Please discuss this within your own congregations. Chi or Phil or I will contact the SEPC Reps in a few weeks' time to see what the response is.

Date for your diary: **the next SEP Council meeting is at 7.30pm on Thursday 21st November at Christ church.**

I hope every church congregation has now chatted about this and is represented at this meeting and whilst I think about it, many thanks to those who always attend.

Volunteer Administrative Assistant

Sincere thanks to the six volunteers for answering the phones every day for us; we are getting more calls now, so it seems the message is getting out there.

The Council are now looking into the possibility of employing a part time administrative assistant, with funding from the Oxford Diocese Development Fund. The four Ministers and Adrian, our Treasurer, have been asked what skills and support they would need and this Job Description is now under consideration by the Partnership Leadership Team. Thank you to Revd Chi for the Job Description profile we are working from. If any of you want to get involved in this process just send me an email or ring me.

Remembrance Sunday 10th November 2024

These services will be taking place at various times and locations throughout our Partnership, depending on Ministers 'capacity, so please check the list of events for each congregation.

Milton Keynes Remembrance Day Service will be at 10.50 on Monday 11th November at Armistice Rose, Campbell Park.

Interfaith week

The theme for this week is 'Stronger Together'

Interfaith Week 2024 will take place from Remembrance Sunday to Sunday 17th November. This week works to encourage people to reflect on the contributions of all faiths and to consider how to create a peaceful and just world. During this week there will be a variety of events.

The Interfaith Network UK, which has led Interfaith Week since 2009, closed in April 2024, but a number of its member groups are working together to ensure the week runs in 2024

Festival of Faiths on Thursday 7th November at Christ the Cornerstone

Lest We Forget

Warm blessings.

Sharron, Chair of SEPC

Update from the Hooke Heritage Project

The St Mary Magdalene Willen Hooke Heritage project was created to repair and preserve its grade 1 church and provide it with toilet, servery and meeting facilities (it currently has none of these). The project reports to the Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership Council and is being delivered by a very small group from St Mary Magdalene Church and the wider community.

With a feasibility study now completed and with the Diocese of Oxford, Historic England and MK City Council providing encouragement in principle to proceed, preparation is now in hand to deliver ambitious, creative and engaging activities to further inform the church's planning (more of that later).

Whilst our small group has project planning, delivery and funding experience we feel the need for additional advice on communications (web development, branding, technology/data) and in project delivery (legal/contractual, business planning, financial, archaeology/biodiversity). If you, or people you know are intrigued enough to want to know more, and have expertise to share, could we maybe meet for a chat and, without commitment, just see where the conversation takes us?

Jacky Scott, Chair (voluntary) Hooke Heritage Project Committee (SEPC)

jacky@thescotts.uk.com

01908 605473

Our Church Services and Events

Bradwell Church, St Lawrence

Sunday 3rd at 10:30 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Jenny Boxwell

Sunday 10th at 10:30 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Steve Barnes

Sunday 17th at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Rev Phil Dunning

Sunday 24th at 10:30 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Lisa Kerry



Services are frequently live-streamed on Facebook using the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/BradwellChurchMK>

Gardening Club on Wednesdays at 10:00

Bell Ringing practice every Wednesday at 19:45. Beginners welcome.

Christ Church, Stantonbury

Sunday 3rd at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Maggie Prisk

Sunday 10th at 10:30 **Morning Worship with Communion
and Virtual Communion**

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala

Sunday 17th at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by John and Jenny Boxwell

Sunday 24th at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala



All Sunday services are live-streamed to Christ Church's Facebook page, using the link below. You don't need to belong to Facebook in order to follow the service.

Streaming starts from 10.25 <https://www.facebook.com/christchurchmk/>

There is also a Christ Church website at www.christchurchmk.org.uk which has the service details on it, and which is updated each week

Saturday 16th at 09:30 **Coffee and cake morning**

all donations received go to Christ Church coffee money charity.

Morning Drop-In every Wednesday 10.00 – 11.30.

Meets at Church, refreshments and a quiz are available.

Under 5's meet every Thursday in **Term time only** from 10:00 to 11:30 in the Hall.

Cross and Stable, Downs Barn

Sunday 3rd at 11:00 **Signed Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala

Sunday 10th at 11:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe

Sunday 17th at 11:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe

Sunday 24th at 11:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe



Services are live-streamed on Zoom at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85922248518?pwd=Tm4vd00wancwVk52cCtqNm5tMWRZdz09>

Meeting ID: 859 2224 8518 **Passcode: 830413**

Friday at 2:00 pm - **Prayer time & Bible reflection on Zoom**

This lasts around 45 mins - do join us from wherever you are on Zoom!

Please contact Sue Baines for the Link on suejbaines@gmail.com

Chatterbox MK every Wednesday from 10:30 to 12:30. All Welcome - tea - coffee - cakes - meet and chat. Come and meet others

Please pray for the **Care Homes in Neath Hill & Downs Barn** as we conduct a Church Service and Holy Communion on **Sunday 24th at 3.00pm and 4.00pm** respectively. Remember the frail, elderly, the caring staff & the concerned families as we minister God's love and grace.

St. Andrews', Great Linford

Sunday 3rd at 10:00 **Open Door**

Led by Stephen Hutchings

Wednesday 6th at 10:00 **1st Wednesday Communion**

Led by Rev Prof John Beazley

Sunday 10th at 10:00 **Service of Remembrance**

Led by Colin Taylor LLM

Sunday 17th at tba Holy Communion

Led by Rev Prof John Beazley

Sunday 24th at tba Holy Communion

Led by Rev Canon Peter Ballantine



Morning Services are live-streamed on Facebook using this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/StAndrewsGL>

Morning Worship every Wednesday at 08:30 in Church. All are welcome to attend in church or on our Facebook page.

St Andrews 1st Wednesday Seminar Group

You would be most welcome to join us on the first Wednesday of each month and participate in the discussion, which usually starts at about 11am. Please email greatlinford@gmail.com if you would like information on the current study topic. **John Beazley**

5 WAYS CAFÉ at St. Andrews' Church

11.00am to 1.00pm on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month

Join us to enjoy good company, refreshments, a selection of board games, Pete on the piano and, for those wanting a bit of exercise, an accompanied walk in Great Linford Manor Park. In addition on the 2nd Tuesday of each month local artist Jane Charles will be leading 'Coffee & Craft - accessible art for everyone', this is a joint venture between 5Ways, Friends of Great Linford Manor Park and the Parks Trust, so come along and see what you can do! All are welcome to 5Ways - we aim to be dementia friendly.

St. James', New Bradwell

Sunday 3rd at 10:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Phil Dunning

and at 15:00 **Bereavement Service**

Led by Helen Rouse LLM

Sunday 10th at 10:00 **Morning Worship for Remembrance**

Led by Helen Rouse LLM

and at 15:00 **Remembrance Day Parade**

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala

Sunday 17th at 10:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Duncan Barnes

Sunday 24th at 10:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Phil Dunning



Services are live-streamed most weeks to St James' Facebook page.

Every Saturday from 10:00 to 12:00 St James' hosts a Coffee Morning.

Visit St James' website at www.stjamesnewbradwell.org.uk for more information.

St. Mary Magdalene, Willen

Sunday 3rd at 09:30 All Age Morning Worship

Led by Margaret Moakes LLM

and at 15:00 All Souls Memorial and Thanksgiving

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala

Sunday 10th at 09:30 Holy Communion for Remembrance

Led by Rev Phil Dunning

Sunday 17th at 09:30 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala

Sunday 24th at 09:30 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Dave Heseltine



The monthly communion service at **Oaktree Court, Portland Drive** will be at **2.45 pm on November 7th**. Anyone who would like to join us, and stay for a cup of tea afterwards, would be welcome. Please speak to Margaret Moakes.

Volunteer Gardening at St Mary Magdalene Church has finished for the year. A big **THANK YOU** to all the volunteers for all their great work in maintaining and upgrading the churchyard in 2024.

T.T.T.T (Third Tuesday at Twelve Thirty) Pop along to St Mary Magdalene Church Willen and be entertained by an exciting new 7-piece local band, **The Breakaways**, on **Tuesday November 19th**, 12.30 - 1.15. Pop in during your lunch break. Walking the dog or just passing by, stay for a while or the whole 45 minutes. Complimentary cake and coffee. Donations to Church Restoration & Hooke Heritage Project

Future Events

Christmas Fayre

10:00-15:00 Saturday 23rd November at St James.

Come along and enjoy festive stalls, Children's games, crafts and refreshments!

MK Ecumenical Confirmation Service

18:00 Sunday 24th November at **Christ the Cornerstone**

Led by The Right Revd Steven Croft, the Bishop of Oxford
where we have 3 members being confirmed.

Role Huddles

Across the Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership there are groups of people with shared interests, abilities, knowledge or talents building links between our six congregations.

These role huddles include those with an interest in:

- ❖ Eco-church
- ❖ IT, sound systems, live-streaming
- ❖ Providing music for services
- ❖ Communication, social media
- ❖ Pastoral Care
- ❖ Care of our church buildings

These are very informal groups, only meeting if needed, but able to offer support.

If you are interested in finding out more, if you feel your congregation needs help with any of these, or if you could offer help, please contact me and I will put you in touch with the group.

Many thanks,

Irene

irene@tfarr.plus.com

External Ecumenical News

We want to plan for our future in faith and church and ministry. If anyone reading this is thinking their future may lie in any level of ministry, please speak to your minister or drop me a line. See note in Partnership News re: House for Duty Minister.

News from Diocese of Oxford

The Diocese of Oxford's common vision for Milton Keynes and the surrounding area includes:

- Discerning God's will: The diocese aims to understand what God is doing in the community and how to best participate.
- Responding to challenges: The diocese focuses on areas such as environmental action, growing new congregations, and addressing poverty and inequality.
- Becoming a more Christ-like Church: The diocese aims to be more compassionate, courageous, and contemplative.
- Celebrating Milton Keynes: The diocese aims to celebrate and bless the city of Milton Keynes.
- Engaging with young people, families, and children: The diocese aims to engage with young people, families, and children in new ways.

News from the Regional Central Baptist Union

Whitley Lecture 2024

Dark Weeping and Light Sleeping: Whiteness as a Doctrine of De-formation

Monday 4th November - 19:30

Click here [for more information about the Lecture](#) and [use this link to join online](#).

Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer

Monday 4th November

[More information and resources](#) will be available from the BWA nearer the time

Encountering Anabaptists

7, 14, 21, and 28 November: A short course to learn something about the history and distinctive convictions and practices of this radical movement

[Click here to sign up](#).

News from the Methodist Circuit

Dear Friends,

As we move into November you may be preparing to remember some people who have been significant to you and others in your family. If so I pray that you will sense how incredibly close and real God is to you, and you are to God. May we not rush through times of remembrance. May we spend what ever time we need to in them.

And may we not be trapped by yesterday but be changed and live differently not just tomorrow but beginning today. And for that, I offer to you a Blessing & Call to Discipleship based on Luke 10:27 & 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a:

God, you have shared your love with me, even me.

Thank you!

You bless and call me to return your love to you
with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, all my strength.

You also bless and call me to share your love with others:
with "us", each one in your family,
and with "them", anyone outside "us".

Father, keep filling me afresh with your Spirit and your love,
so that when I am with anyone, one of "us", or "them",
and when it seems most likely that I won't,
with you in me:

I will be patient and kind.

I will not envy, not boast, not be proud.

I will not dishonour others, not be self-seeking,
not be easily angered, but even when I am

I will keep no record of wrongs.

I will not delight in evil,
but I will rejoice with the truth.

I will always protect, always trust, always hope,
always persevere.

For your love never failed, and never fails,
in Christ, in me, in "us", in "them".

Amen!

News from The United Reformed Church

Let's End Poverty has started a new campaign, supported by the United Reformed Church, called "Dear Prime Minister..."

Fifteen open letters, written by those who have experienced and are currently living in poverty, asking when new policies are going to be put in place, have been delivered to Sir Keir Starmer.

Cat Smith MP, who hosted the event on 15 October in parliament, asked the Prime Minister about the campaign. You can watch some of this in a video that shared [on Facebook](#).

Hannah Freemont-Brown, Anti-Poverty Movement Methodist Coordinator, talked to Salma El-Wardany on [BBC Radio London](#) about the campaign and what it was like to deliver the letters to parliament (listen from 1hr 9mins.)

[Learn more about the campaign, read the letters and discover how you can get involved.](#)

Thank you for reading this, Sharron, Chair of SEP CIO Council

News from Churches Together in Milton Keynes

Our strapline is:

One in Christ Jesus, engaged in God's mission, empowered by the Spirit.

There are far too many items on the website to list, so please take a look for yourself at: [Churches Together in Milton Keynes \(ctmk.church\)](http://ctmk.church)

News from the Partnership Green Champions

Eco tip for November

Nature Friendly Gardening Guide

Gardens in urban areas make up almost 50% of urban green space and contain 25% of non-forest or woodland trees. So making our gardens wildlife friendly has a major impact on many species.

The Nature Friendly Gardening Guide from the Soil Association has ideas for how you can make changes to your garden, window box, balcony or terrace to be more friendly to wildlife. You can find the guide by following the link:

<https://www.soilassociation.org/take-action/growing-at-home/nature-friendly-gardening-guide/thanks-for-downloading-the-nature-friendly-gardening-guide-autumn/>

Ben, Head of Horticulture at the Soil Association, writes:

In this guide, we'll look at why autumn is a good time to plant and what to plant. I'll share my experience on how to plant a tree, as well as how to keep it healthy once it's in the ground.

There are also some top tips for how to help wildlife over the winter, from leaving seed heads for songbirds and growing cover crops to protect the soil, to creating much needed habitats for insects.

I hope that you have found this and previous newsletters interesting and useful. If there is anything you think would make it better or find any glaring omissions, please let your congregation's newsletter editor, Sharron or myself know.

*The deadline for information to go into December's issue is **Monday 25th November** to allow me to get it to you in time to send out before the beginning of December.*

John

John Porter sepnewsletter9@gmail.com