

Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership

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



March 2025 Newsletter

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

Partnership News

Pastoral letter from Revd. Canon Chi

1st March 2025

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

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

I have recently returned safely from Nigeria, where I had the opportunity to visit my family, particularly my father. This visit was deeply meaningful, not only because of time spent with loved ones, but also because I was **collated and installed as an Honorary Canon of the Cathedral Church of St Mary's, Nnewi**. It was a humbling experience to receive this recognition, and I remain grateful to God for His grace and to all who have supported me in my ministry. I appreciate your prayers during this time and thank God for His protection throughout my journey. (See photo on back page)

News from the Diocese

I am delighted to share that The Rt Revd David Bull was consecrated as the new Bishop of Buckingham on 27th February 2025 at Canterbury Cathedral. This marks a new chapter in the life of our diocese, and we look forward to working with him as he leads us in faith and mission.

There will be a welcome service for Bishop David at Christ the Cornerstone, Milton Keynes, on Sunday, 9th March 2025, at 3pm. I encourage you all to turn out in great numbers to give our new bishop a warm and prayerful welcome as he begins his ministry among us.

Embracing the Season of Lent

As we step into March, we find ourselves in the heart of the Lenten season, a time of deep reflection, repentance, and renewal. Lent calls us to turn our hearts towards God, to examine our lives, and to realign ourselves with His purposes. The prophet Joel reminds us, ***“Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love”*** (Joel 2:13). This is an invitation for us all to draw closer to God, setting aside distractions and making space for His presence in our lives.

Lent is not merely a time of giving things up, but also of taking things on—committing ourselves afresh to prayer, worship, and acts of love and service. As a partnership,

we have a rich programme of activities over this period, including Bible study groups, quiet days, and special services (Ash Wednesday etc) that will help us journey meaningfully towards Easter. I encourage you to engage fully with these opportunities and to invite your family, friends, and neighbours to join you.

Investing in the Next Generation

In January, I embarked on the **Incumbent Development Programme**, a valuable initiative designed by the Diocese to equip incumbents to **rebuild and strengthen ministry for children, young people, and families across our benefice**. This programme is an exciting opportunity to ensure that our churches are places where younger generations can grow in faith, feel a sense of belonging, and be nurtured in their discipleship. As we move forward, I invite you all to pray for this work and to consider ways in which you might contribute to the flourishing of our children and young people's ministry.

Highlight

One of the great joys in our partnership is seeing how different forms of worship bring people together. In particular, the **Family Service at Cross and Stable continues to grow, drawing many families into a warm and welcoming space of worship and fellowship**. It has been encouraging to see parents and children engaging in worship together, and I extend my sincere congratulations to **Revd Sam and his team** for their dedication in leading this vibrant service. May it continue to be a source of joy and spiritual nourishment for all who attend.

The Journey Ahead

As we walk through Lent together, let us be mindful that this season ultimately leads us to the **joy of Easter**—to the triumph of life over death, hope over despair, and light over darkness. But before we arrive at the empty tomb, we are called to journey with Christ through the wilderness, the upper room, and the cross. Let us embrace this journey with open hearts, allowing God to work within us and transform us.

A Prayer for Lent

Heavenly Father, as we journey through Lent, help us to walk closely with You. Strengthen our faith, deepen our love, and renew our commitment to follow Christ. May this season draw us nearer to You, and may we be a light to those around us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May God bless you and your loved ones in this holy season.

Yours in Christ,

Revd. Canon Chi Okpala

Team Rector & Team Leader SEP

Notice from Rev Phil Dunning

'MED group - to make diagnosis'

First meeting - Monday 17th March 2025

7.30pm at the Bradwell Chapel. MK13 9AF

As part of the wider SEP Mission strategy, I am now convening meetings of the Mission, Evangelism and Discipleship (MED) group; seeking to link our churches

together to promote, enable and coordinate the missional activities we need for spiritual and numeric growth.

These will be both strategic and prayerful meetings, designed to consider what we are already doing individually as churches and possibly how activities could be extended or replicated in other areas. We will be asking questions about mission effectiveness and what else should be done to promote faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and his authority in our midst. All the partnership churches need to make allowances toward this strategic thinking, and the group will be following up with those who perhaps prefer only to please themselves.

I would describe this very much as Jesus did, with a wider focus on 'Kingdom' - *'the Kingdom of God has come near'* (Mark 1 v 15) - rather than just the individual church, which can be very insular. We take our faith and the church into the wider world, rather than seeking only to bring the wider world into the church.

These meetings are open to anybody to attend, and I will seek to enable both in person and online, via zoom, attendance.

...It would be great to welcome representation from each of the SEP Churches. The minutes we take of the meetings will also be made available afterward, but participation and contribution is key.

I pray we truly think and pray, and then move and work together - to see God's glory here, and welcome true newness of life together in the SEP Churches.

Rev **Phil Dunning - SEP Vision Enabler**

'And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come'.

Matthew 24 v 14 ESV

Message from Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe

FAMILY BREAKFAST CLUB

CROSS & STABLE DOWNS BARN - 4TH SUNDAYS -10AM

A new venture. I write this after our 2nd very successful Breakfast Club.

As a Church we have moved away from intergenerational worship in Church following societal pressures. We come as individuals or couples, rarely as families. The aim was to restore Family Worship. When the same experiment is repeated, we get the same result. A new experiment was needed. Hence after much prayer and thought, we launched this programme receiving unanimous support from the CLT. Time change, multiple volunteers, variable skill sets, time and money- from each person, all volunteers wanting to do something for the glory of God. "Unless the Lord builds the House, we labour but in vain."

Our advertisement efforts included Church notices, posters, social media, and Eventbrite. However, those who attended were primarily reached through personal one-to-one invitations. We have had around 20 children and 60 adults. They came as families- grandparents with young adults and the children. About half of them came to us at Church for the very first time!

The Continental Breakfast went down a treat, they came for more – it was free! It was lovely seeing young adult parents relaxed, watching their little ones having breakfast. The chatter and laughter of the children filled the Church! The Youth

conducted the children's action songs, the Bible Story time and the craft work. They later led the brief Family Service which contained all the vitals of a service liturgy, and I gave a v short message.

Unlocking and giving an expression of the talents of our volunteers- both young and old is the gift God has given us in our Church right now. No doubt there is more in the riches of our Father in Heaven to be unleashed, for the building of God's Church for the glory of God in serving our people.

The next one is on the 23rd of March. Come and see!

Sam Muthuveloe

Minister – Cross & Stable Church Downs Barn. MK14 7RQ -
sam.muthuveloe@gmail.com

New Bishop of Buckingham

Please see the attached Invitation to the Welcome Service for the Rt Rev Dave Bull.

Partnership wide services 2025 for your diaries

The next Partnership wide service will be held at St Andrew's church in Great Linford at 11.00a.m on 30th March. They have changed their service time to 11.00 to accommodate our employed ministers and all congregations in Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership. Thank you! The 2025 SEP services are June 29, August 31, November 30.

We will use the same system as last time, where individual congregations choose to open or close and leave a welcomer. March 30th is Mothering Sunday and the service will be led by our Baptist Minister, but, as usual, it will include the whole ecumenical partnership denominations. Please let Revd. Chi, Revd. Phil or Church Warden, Stephen Hutchings, know if you are able to take part in the service.

House for duty Anglican minister

I have sent the agreed Parish Profile to the Pastoral Advisor, Asa, at the Diocese. We wait for them to put the advert out, so that this post will, hopefully, be filled in September 2025.

Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership Council

Our last meeting before the SEPCIO AGM (where new members will be elected), is Thursday 20th March at 7.30. I wish you all the energy to attend your Congregation Annual Meeting this month and please offer your help if you have never been involved in this way before. You are needed.

Administrative Assistant

See attached Job advert.

Lent

Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day) is 4th March and Lent begins the day after on Ash Wednesday 5th March. Please see Phil's notes (from last month's SEP Newsletter) on what Bible Study is available to help us understand Lent.

British Summer and Daylight-Saving Time begins on 30th March, which is also Mothering Sunday and our SEP Service at St. Andrew's, so please remember to alter your clocks.

Support for the Homeless in Milton Keynes

Unity MK have been informed that their night shelter above the UPS will be relocated to the Fishermead Hostel from 31 March. Sadly, this also means that evening meals will no longer be provided to the Council homeless after this date.

Christian Aid Conference 8th March

We have been asked if a representative could attend, either in person, in London, or by Zoom, from home. If you are able to attend and feedback to us that would be wonderful. Rev Chi and I are at the Diocese Synod that day so cannot attend. Please get in touch with me, or your Minister for the details.

Warm blessings and a Happy New Year.
Sharron, Chair of SEPC

Our Church Services and Events

Bradwell Church, St Lawrence

Sunday 2nd at 10:30 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Ian Suttie

Sunday 9th at 10:30 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Phil Dunning

Sunday 16th at 10:30 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Susan Jackson

Sunday 23rd at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Chris Spikings

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

Led by Mike Morris



This month's dates for live streaming services to You Tube are March 2nd, 9th, 16th and 30th. The You Tube link is @BradwellChurch MiltonKeynes. Simply go to You Tube, search for this and click the red live button just before the service begins.

Gardening Club comes back out of dormancy on 5th March. There is a lot to do and we really need more members see Andrew and Angela.

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

Christ Church, Stantonbury

Sunday 2nd at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Rev Phil Dunning

Sunday 9th at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by John and Jenny Boxwell

Sunday 16th at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Maggie Prisk

Sunday 23rd at 10:30 **Morning Worship with Communion**

Led by Rev Phil Dunning



Sunday 23rd at 10:30 No Service

See St Andrew's for details of SEP Service.

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 15th 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 2nd at 11:00 Signed Holy Communion

Led by Rev Peter Green

Sunday 9th at 11:00 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe

Sunday 16th at 11:00 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Phil Dunning

Sunday 23rd at 10:00 Family Breakfast Club

Led by Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe

Sunday 30th at 11:00 Morning Worship

Led by Stephen Fletcher LLM



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 23rd 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 2nd at 11:00 Open Door

Led by Steven Hutchings

Wednesday 5th at 10:00 Wednesday Communion

Led by Rev Prof John Beazley

Sunday 9th at 11:00 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala



Sunday 16th at 11:00 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Prof John Beazley

Sunday 23rd at 11:00 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala

Sunday 30th at 11.00 SEP Service

Led by Revs Canon Chi Okpala, Phil Dunning and Dr Sam Muthuveloe

Silent Reflection in the Chancel

9.30 to 10am prior to 11am Sunday Services (coffee available from 10am)

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. Coffee & Craft with local artist Jane Charles will be back again on 2nd Tuesdays from April to September and we are hopeful of further dates – you can email greatlinford@googlemail.com for the latest information. All are welcome to 5Ways - we aim to be dementia friendly

St. James', New Bradwell

Sunday 2nd at 09:30 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Duncan Barnes

Wednesday 5th at 19:00 Ash Wednesday Communion

Led by Revs Canon Chi Okpala and Duncan Barnes

Sunday 9th at 09:30 Morning Worship

Led by Helen Rouse LLM

Sunday 16th at 09:30 Holy Communion with Healing

Led by Revs Canon Chi Okpala and Duncan Barnes



Sunday 23rd at 09:30 Holy Communion

Led by Rev David Nash

Sunday 30th at 09:30 Morning Worship

Led by Helen Rouse LLM

Services are live-streamed most weeks to St James' Facebook page at [St James Church NB | Facebook](#)

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 2nd at 09:30 All Age Morning Worship

Led by Margaret Moakes LLM

Sunday 9th at 09:30 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe

Sunday 16th at 09:30 Morning Prayer

Led by Rev Steve Barnes

Sunday 23rd at 09:30 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala

Sunday 30th at 09:30 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Canon Chi Okpala



The monthly communion service at **Oaktree Court, Portland Drive** will be at **2.45 pm on March 6th**. 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 is currently on a well-deserved winter break and will start again in the spring.

T.T.T.T (Third Tuesday at Twelve Thirty) starts again in March for the 2025 season of events. Pop along to St Mary Magdalene Church Willen and be entertained by **U3A band Playpals** on **Tuesday March 18th**, 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.

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY - a Lent Study group will be meeting weekly on Thursday evenings. during Lent at 7.00 pm in the Quaker Centre, Downs Barn. The dates of the study group meetings are: 6th March, 13th March, 20th March, 27th March, 3rd April and 10th April.

St Mary Magdalene Willen: Hooke Heritage Project

Have you a moment to complete a short survey to help St Mary Magdalene Willen Leadership Team understand the users and uses that our potential new building could serve, as well as to identify what the community most values about the historic church? Please help our project by completing the survey online at <https://forms.gle/YSF4MEWDxy61CmAC6>

Should a paper survey be preferred, please let me know and I will arrange for the survey to be delivered to you.

Jacky Scott, Chair, Hooke Heritage Project jacky@thescotts.uk.com 01908 605473

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 Rev Chi or drop me a line.

News from Diocese of Oxford

General Synod:

General Synod met to discuss and decide on a number of issues for the Church of England, including safeguarding processes, clergy conduct, Prayers of Love and Faith, finance, racial justice and working-class ministry.

There was considerable debate on safeguarding independence with Synod asked to vote on the establishment of an independent scrutiny body. This motion was overwhelmingly agreed upon. Synod moved on to discuss whether diocesan safeguarding teams should also be part of an independent organisation. An amendment to the motion was supported, this agreed to undertake further work to determine the legal and practical requirements to transfer the employment of DSTs to an independent body.

A recent external audit of the safeguarding policy and practice within Oxford Diocese resulted in a judgement of 'Outstanding'.

News from the Regional Central Baptist Union



Baptist Churches have a long and varied history of engaging with children, young people and families (CYF). Recently a [Round Table](#) of representatives from Baptist Churches, Baptist Colleges and Baptist Together Regional Ministers has been formed, with a national mandate to reflect, inform, inspire and raise the profile of CYF ministry across Baptists Together and beyond.

The newly emerging CYF Network in the CBA is coming together to help support and encourage those involved in any kind of children, youth or family ministries within the CBA, whilst also aiming to engage with the Round Table process connecting our regional conversations with the national big picture. The CYF Round Table rep for CBA is Simon Cragg.

News from the Methodist Circuit

Quarterly Circuit Service – Sunday 2nd March

The first of our new Quarterly Circuit Services will be held on Sunday 2nd March, 10.30am at Freeman Memorial Methodist Church, Buckingham Road, Bletchley, MK3 5HH.

The Service will be led by our Circuit Superintendent, Revd Edson Dube, with contributions from church members from around the Circuit and the Circuit Choir led by Julie Gillam.

Parking: The church car park is very small and will be restricted to those who are less able. We suggest that you park in the Wellington Place car park (cost £1 for 4 hrs) and use the route to the church shown on the map (link below).

[Freeman Memorial – Map showing alternative car parking](#)

Please car share if possible!

OneVoice Podcast from the Northampton Methodist District

February's OneVoice Podcast is now LIVE, here's what to expect from this Month's offering:

- The Hope Centre in Northampton has just held their annual sleep out and thanks to Kyra Williams, the first hand accounts of those who took part are featured in this episode. Queensgrove Methodist Church was a past host for their winter night shelter, so it's great to hear more about Hope's ongoing work and how it supports those without a home.
- Meanwhile in Overstone, a new wave of discipleship is about to launch. Mel Brown tells us about the ideas, enthusiasm and commitment that's needed to make this yet another success story in that area.
- It may be February, but panto season isn't over. Not a bit of it! Victoria Summers is with the podcast to talk about Aladdin : The True Story and how you can see it at St Andrew's church in Duston. How does she find the time to write, direct and perform in it???

Link to the podcast – [Northampton Methodist District | October 2023 OneVoice Podcast Edition is Live](#)

News from The United Reformed Church

Richard Knott



Children's & Youth Development Officer (CYDO)

[Contact Richard](#)

Richard's role as CYDO is to offer support to all churches in the Synod seeking to ensure that all are encouraged, equipped and enabled to engage effectively with children, young people and their households.

Richard is available to support churches in the development of new or existing projects and to empower children and young people to take a lead role within their local churches, the Synod and at Assembly level. Believing passionately that the Church as the body of Christ is at its best when all ages are fully involved together, Richard would be delighted to hear from you.

Thank you for reading this.

Sharron, Chair of SEP CIO Council

News from Churches Together in Milton Keynes

Our strapline is:

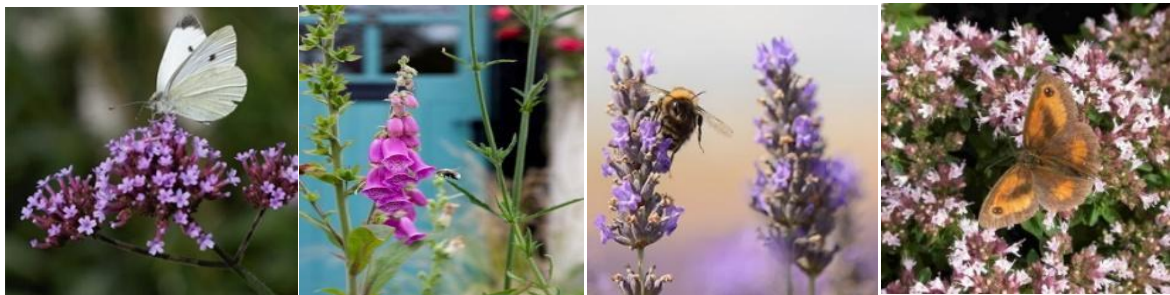
One in Christ Jesus, engaged in God's mission, empowered by the Spirit.

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 March 2025

PLANTING FOR WILDLIFE



As the days lengthen March is the time when we often think about new plants for our garden. **So this Eco-Tip is focused on garden plants we might choose to**

benefit wildlife. See the chart below to find pollinator and bird friendly plants you might like for your garden.

Garden flowers

Early flowers	Mid season flowers	Late/winter flowers	Winter seed heads for birds	Good for
Primrose Sweet violet Red deadnettle Bugle Aquilegia Aubretia Lungwort Red valerian Sweet rocket Honesty Geranium	Verbena bonariensis Common mallow Teasel Black knapweed Hemp agrimony Honeysuckle Sunflower Buddleia Lavender French marigold Viper's bugloss Foxglove Geranium	coneflower Ivy Ice plant Michaelmas daisy Winter flowering Mahonia Geranium	Teasel Echinacea Phlomis Poppies Ice plant (Sedum) Eryngiums Alliums Heleniums Ornamental grasses Rudbeckias Echinops Agastache Hyssop Sunflowers Honesty	Pollen and nectar for butterflies, moths, hoverflies, bees and other insects Seeds for birds

Thank you to Janet Galsworthy for the chart. Another good source including beneficial culinary herbs, wild flowers, trees, shrubs and climbers is: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/beefriendly-plants-every-season>

I hope that you have found this and previous newsletters over the years 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 April's issue is **Tuesday 25th March** to allow me to get it to you in time to send out before the beginning of April.*

John

John Porter sepnewsletter9@gmail.com

I know I have gone a bit over my page quota this month but a lot of information and I have been asked to include the pictures on the next page. JP



Chi's Canon service.



Quorum choir at Bath Abbey February 2025.