

Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership

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



September 2025 Newsletter

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

Partnership News

Pastoral News

September 2025

Welcome to a new season!

*'He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and
raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge
to the discerning' Daniel 2 v 21 (NIV)*

Friends, its good to greet you as another new term begins - the season of creation and changing colours; with thoughts of a new start and inspiration. Although uncertainty remains in our Partnership of Churches, there is much to encourage us as September begins picking our focus on the Heritage weeks and new faces in our Ministry team.

I'm particularly inspired by the hopes generated as our churches utilise the focus on our heritage this month; celebrating the history of our congregations and buildings. There is much to be remembered and admired by this celebration of ancient Christian witness; even within our 'new town'. I'm also looking forward to touring all of our churches on my bike during the wonderfully named 'ride & stride' event sponsored by the Buckinghamshire Historic Churches Trust on September 13th. This date is acting as our 'Partnership Pilgrimage' this year. Details of my route that day follows for any who would like to accompany me.

September also sees a nationwide call to prayer and the start of the church inspired season of creation; a natural focus too as we approach our harvest celebrations this year. I particularly noted the verse above in my studies recently, marking our God who not only is constant in changing seasons, but also oversees the changes they mark. Let us once again look to him and find our hopes renewed to inspire others in all times of change and transition.

With every blessing

Rev Phil Dunning
SEP Baptist Minister and Vision Enabler
...Acting Ministry team leader

A message from Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe

Evaluating the Heart of Our Church Service

Reflecting on Purpose and Impact for Lasting Relevance

How Best Can We Evaluate a Church Service?

A church service is far more than a scheduled gathering — it is the living heartbeat of a community bound together by faith, hope, and love. For our congregation to remain authentic and relevant, it is vital to pause and consider how our services fulfil their purpose and impact the lives of those who attend, as well as the broader community to which we witness and serve.

Understanding Purpose: The Foundation of Evaluation

At its core, the purpose of a church service is to glorify God, nurture spiritual growth, and foster a sense of fellowship. To evaluate whether these aims are being met, begin by asking: Does each part of our service — worship, teaching, prayer, and sacrament — point us towards God and deepen our relationship with Christ? Are our messages rooted in scripture and relevant to daily life? Engagement with the Word should inspire, comfort, and challenge — if it does, the service is fulfilling its spiritual purpose.

Measuring Impact: Within and Beyond the Congregation

Impact is best measured through transformation — both individual and corporate. Are attendees encouraged and equipped to live out their faith outside the church walls? One way to evaluate this is through testimonies: stories of changed hearts, renewed hope, and acts of service inspired by the worship experience. Regular feedback — whether gathered through conversation, written reflections, or anonymous surveys — can reveal how the service is affecting lives.

Equally important is our witness to the community. Is our church service open and welcoming to newcomers and seekers? Are we attentive to the needs and concerns of our neighbourhood, responding with compassion and practical support? Consider partnering with local organizations or hosting outreach events that flow naturally from our worship. If our service inspires us to serve, advocate, and love our neighbours, its impact is reaching beyond our doors.

Authenticity and Relevance: Anchored in Relationship

A truly authentic church service is marked by honesty, vulnerability, and joy. It acknowledges both the brokenness and beauty in our lives, and invites all to participate, regardless of background or circumstance. To maintain relevance, our service should adapt to the rhythms of contemporary life while remaining anchored in eternal truths. This means offering multiple ways to connect — through music, art, dialogue, work and silence — and continuing to listen for the Spirit's guidance in shaping our gatherings.

Practical Steps for Ongoing Evaluation

- Encourage open dialogue with members about what resonates and where they see room for growth.
- Observe levels of participation and engagement — not just attendance, but involvement in worship, learning, and service.
- Review how well we communicate our message to those outside our immediate circle.

- Seek God's wisdom in prayer, trusting that evaluation is not about criticism, but about faithfully stewarding our calling.

To evaluate a church service is, ultimately, to ensure that we remain a living, breathing witness to Christ — authentic, relevant, and ever attuned to the needs of all whom we encounter. May we continue to reflect, adapt, and grow, so that our gatherings remain luminous signposts of grace and love in our community.

The Licensing Service for Revd Peterson Feital will take place at 7.30pm on Tuesday 23rd September at St. James, New Bradwell. Revd. Peterson will move into the house near St. Andrew's in Great Linford, beginning his ministry with SEP on 1st September. He will be joining Revd Sam and Revd Phil in the Tree Cathedral service on 21st September and will begin leading services after 23rd September.

The Welcome Service for Revd Kofi Tekyi-Ansah took place on Sunday 24th August at Queensway Methodist Church, Bletchley. Revd Kofi begins his ministry with us on 1st September and his first service will be to support Revd Sam and Revd Phil on 21st September at the Tree Cathedral. Revd. Kofi will lead one service a month throughout the six congregations in SEP.

Partnership wide services 2025 for your diaries

Please put these dates in your diary. The 2025 SEP wide services are Heritage Week at the Tree Cathedral on 21st September at 4.00pm, (note changed time) where we will be joined by Bradwell Silver Band and 30th November at 11.00 at St Andrew's Great Linford. (See attached Tree Cathedral poster)

Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership Council

Partnership Pilgrimage Walk will take place this year on Saturday 13th September. You will receive posters stating the route and times so please put these on your external noticeboards. Please come along to ride or stride together, also see Future Events on page .

The next meeting will be 7.30p.m. on Thursday 18th September at St James, New Bradwell.

Helen's SEP admin. phone number is 01908 382458 and her email is sburyepadm@gmail.com.

Our hope is that Helen will remove some of the burden of administrative tasks from the shoulders of our ministers and officers. We can all help with that by contacting Helen, in the first instance, instead of our ministers and officers.

My continued thanks to our six volunteers who still answer this phone every day.

God Bless
Sharron, Lay Chair of SEPC

Our Church Services and Events

Bradwell Church, St Lawrence

Sunday 7th at 10:30 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Phil Dunning

Sunday 14th at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Stuart Keane

Sunday 21st at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Rev Jenny Boxwell

Sunday 28th at 10:30 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Chris Bull



Most services are live streamed to You Tube. 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 on Wednesday's at 10:00. 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.

Our annual Heritage Open Day is the 13th September this year. We join hundreds of sites around the country to open the church to visitors including History tours, other local attractions are Bradwell Abbey, Bradwell Mill, St James, New Bradwell and a silver band at the tree Cathedral. We will be providing refreshments during the day. The bell ringers as usual hope to provide demonstrations of bell ringing and give visitors the opportunity to have a go. This year we also will be joining the National Week of Prayer with structured prayer vigils throughout the day starting with Rev Phil Dunning at 10am. The Eco-Church group will also be active, explaining our eco-aims as well as giving tours of the church and churchyard including our wildlife area.

Christ Church, Stantonbury

Sunday 7th at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Rev David Nash

Sunday 14th at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Rev Phil Dunning

Sunday 21st at 10:30 **Morning Worship**

Led by Colin Taylor

Sunday 28th at 10:30 **Morning Worship with Communion + Virtual Communion**

Led by Rev Ian Suttie



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 20th 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 is shut for the summer and will restart on September 11th.

Please Note: Christ Church's 50-year anniversary celebration Lunch on **Saturday 27th September** at 12pm with new art work unveiling (see attached Poster).

Cross and Stable, Downs Barn

Sunday 7th at 11:00 **Signed Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Peter Green

Sunday 14th at 11:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe

Sunday 21st at 11:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Phil Dunning

Sunday 28th at 10:00 **Family Breakfast Club**

Led by Rev Dr Sam Muthuveloe



Bell Ringing practice every Friday at 19:30.

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 28th 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

Wednesday 3rd at 10:00 **Wednesday Communion**

Led by Rev Prof John Beazley

Sunday 7th at 11:00 **Open Door**

Led by the Open Door Group

Sunday 14th at 11:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Hannah Akibo-Betts

Sunday 21st at 11:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Prof John Beazley

Sunday 28th at 11:00 **Holy Communion**

Led by Rev Kofi Tekyi-Ansah



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.

Bell Ringing practice every Tuesday at 19:30.

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 7th at 09:30 Morning Worship

Led by Helen Rouse LLM

Sunday 14th at 09:30 Methodist Communion

Led by Rev Stephanie Hibberd

Sunday 21st at 09:30 Baptist Communion

Led by Rev David Nash

Sunday 28th at 09:30 Baptist Communion

Led by Rev Dr Mary Cotes



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 and Wednesday from 09:30 to 11:30, St James' hosts a Coffee Morning.

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

St. Mary Magdalene, Willen

Sunday 7th at 09:30 All Age Morning Worship

Led by Margaret Moakes LLM

Sunday 14th at 09:30 Holy Communion

Led by Rev Hannah Akibo-Betts

Sunday 21st at 09:30 Holy Communion by Extension

Led by Margaret Moakes LLM

Sunday 28th at 09:30 Holy Communion with Harvest Thanksgiving Service

Led by Rev Phil Dunning



The monthly communion service at **Oaktree Court, Portland Drive** will be at **2.30 pm on September 4th**. Anyone who would like to join us, would be welcome. Please speak to Margaret Moakes.

T.T.T.T (Third Tuesday at Twelve Thirty) Pop along to St Mary Magdalene Church Willen and be entertained by **Saxophrenia** on **Tuesday September 16th**, 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

‘Partnership Pilgrimage’ - Saturday 13th September
...in association with the Buckingham Churches ‘Ride & Stride’ event

Phil’s cycling tour - with times of prayer in each church.

Bradwell, St Lawrence Church - 10.00am

St James, New Bradwell - 11.00am

Christchurch, Stantonbury - 12.00pm

St Andrews, Great Linford - 1.00pm

Cross & Stable Church - Downs Barn - 2.00pm

Willen, St Mary Magdalene Church - 3.00pm

Friends are welcome to join me ‘on tour’ - either cycling with me to all venues or joining me at these times in any of our Churches.

12-22 September 2025 Heritage Week. Most if not all Partnership church buildings will be open at times during the week. See your local news sheet for further details.

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 Phil or drop me a line.

News from Diocese of Oxford



New Archdeacon of Buckingham announced

The Diocese of Oxford is delighted to announce the appointment of the Revd Gavin Knight as Archdeacon of Buckingham, which has come about due to the upcoming retirement of The Venerable Guy Elsmore.

Gavin has been Vicar of St Michael and All Angels, Summertown, Oxford, for almost 14 years, was previously a chaplain to Monmouth School, and prior to that Priest in Charge at St Andrews's, Fulham Fields. He is also currently

Area Dean for Oxford. He was ordained in 1999 in the Diocese of Birmingham. He will take up his post in November and will be based in the Area Office at Stone.

Bishop Dave Bull, Bishop of Buckingham said: "I look forward to seeing the wider church in Bucks thrive as Gavin joins the team here. We very much look forward to welcoming him in the autumn. Gavin, his wife Jo, and his three sons will be in my prayers as he prepares for this role.

Gavin said: "After serving the parish of Summertown and Deanery of Oxford, I am excited to explore the ever changing sights and sounds of the Buckingham Archdeaconry. I am committed to help build the emerging team here under Bishop Dave's oversight and create connections with rural and urban parishes, with lay and ordained leaders. This is an exciting time in the life of the Buckingham Area to journey together and knock at the door of the Kingdom.

News from the Regional Central Baptist Union

Baptist Union of Great Britain Trustee Board statement regarding Spurgeon's College

The Trustee Board of the Baptist Union of Great Britain is deeply saddened to learn the news that Spurgeon's College has entered the insolvency process, resulting in the closure of the College. Since its inception in 1850 by Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the College has trained many women and men for Baptist ministry and mission. The College's commitment to training for preaching, pastoring and evangelism has shaped leaders and church communities through many generations, the significance of which is immeasurable.

We recognise the magnitude of the impact this news will have on the staff and students of Spurgeon's College and our thoughts and prayers are with them. We are giving national Specialist Team support into the situation. Supporting Baptist students is our first priority at this point. We have begun conversations with other Baptist Colleges in membership with the Union and with Regional Associations to determine how Baptist students who have been studying, or are about to embark on study, at Spurgeon's College may best be supported. Details of this support will be posted on the [information page](#). We are also funding a Student Support Centre so that over the next few weeks students have someone to ask about transferring to other providers of theological education and ministerial formation.

[As stated by Spurgeon's in their statement on 31 July 2025](#), the charitable foundation who were providing financial support unexpectedly withdrew this on 21 July 2025. We were made aware on 22 July. Sadly, it was not possible for the Baptist Union of Great Britain to offer financial support on the scale that would have been required. *Note: Spurgeon's College is a separate legal entity from the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). The Board of Trustees of BUGB has no responsibility for any aspect*

of the governance or management of Spurgeon's College and has not been part of the decision making or the day-to-day operation of the College.

News from the Methodist Church

"Pilgrimage" means different things to different people. Attempts to define pilgrimage are inevitably imprecise, but the following thinking might be helpful, along with some more precise structures offered later:

- Pilgrimage is a transformational journey, during which significant change takes place.
- Pilgrimage often has a physical element, but is also cognitive and emotional.
- Wesleyan pilgrimage is inclusive - there are ways in which it can work for all.
- Pilgrimage may be seen as a search for God (or is God really searching for us?)
- What makes a walk/holiday/event into a pilgrimage? Preparation? Intentionality? At least some sense of intentionality in the mind of the organiser, but not all participants have to buy into every aspect in order for it to be pilgrimage.
- "Pilgrimage is far more than making a physical journey. It is being prepared to allow that restlessness, which is in every human soul, to entice us away from our security in search of something deeper, a clearer vision of the God who calls us to his service." (Canon Stephen Shipley).

'Mindfulness' and 'Mission' are "buzz" words in the current climate - pilgrimage has something to offer to both, with the potential to enhance our experience of God and our engagement with the world.

- An intentional pilgrimage can be seen as a metaphor for life and can help participants to reflect upon:
 - Setting out:** departure/preparation/restlessness/striving for something more, something deeper/conversion/birth and death/leaving places, possessions and people behind...
 - **Travelling the pilgrim path:** an outer and an inner journey/companionship along the way (with present companions but also with those who have trodden the path in the past and who will do so in the future)/attentiveness - to nature, to companions, to God/struggle/pleasure/sights and sounds/colour...
 - **The sacred centre:** encounter with the Holy/transcendence/worship/the Divine/thin places/theophany/transfiguration/significance of place...
 - **Re-entry:** transformation/self-awareness, how have I changed?/what have I learned - about myself/others/God/moving on/parting from new friends/descending the mountain/ending one journey is starting another...
- A Dominican model offers another four-fold pattern which can be applied to pilgrimage:
 - Via positive
 - Via negative
 - Via creative
 - Via transformative

In any pilgrimage the following may be true:

- Transformation takes place through walking, talking, mutual support and care, shared food & drink, communal worship, prayer and silence.
- Pilgrimage offers a liminal space in which emotions may come to the surface, inner soul-searching may be undertaken, pilgrims grow in self-awareness, in awareness of others and of God.
- Carrying packs can lead to deeper reflection on "what are we carrying?" in life.
- Visiting pilgrimage sites/touching the sacred may lead people to confront their own faith/doubt. Sometimes it brings disillusionment and the need to rebuild vision and discover new priorities.
- Encounter with other Christian traditions - whether ancient or current - can lead to a re-examination of contextual theology and practice.
- Journeying together - especially in the open air, provides a neutral, non-threatening environment where questioners and seekers may feel more comfortable than in a church setting.
- There is huge potential for Christian pilgrims to "bring a friend" on such a venture and intentionally to create pilgrimage with a relaxed missional element.

News from The United Reformed Church

A growing number of congregations have joined Children and Youth Work's Children and Youth Friendly Scheme.

The Children and Youth Friendly Church Scheme (CYFC) helps churches improve their welcome to children, young people, and families. Participating churches work with a trained accompanier who helps them identify current practice and develop ways to build on it.

East Midlands Synod

Richard Knott, CYDO+ for East Midlands Synod, accompanied Newport Pagnell through the scheme. He said: "Throughout the process the group has worked prayerfully and diligently to wrestle with some of the challenges and opportunities in their context and I am pleased with the level of engagement and participation I witnessed." Activities run by the church include baby massage courses, run at its independent Mead Centre, regular and longstanding children and young people feel welcomed and are an important part of the church community, including children and young people in services, and providing a designated space for children in the foyer at the front of the church.

Victoria Blunt, Newport Pagnell's church contact, said: "It's good to hear that the church incorporates intergenerational activities into worship and is showing a commitment to embedding that further."

The East Midlands Synod's staff and officers warmly invite you to drop into **Christ the Cornerstone Milton Keynes** on **Monday 29th September** to meet, chat and tell us about your hopes, dreams and anxieties for your church.

Following well received visits around the East Midlands last year, our **Synod Team on Tour** initiative comes to **Milton Keynes** for the fifth of our 2025 outings. The idea is simple: we base ourselves in one local church for the day, so that anyone from any church within reach can pop along and say hello, without having to make an appointment or go to the Synod Office. On this occasion we are grateful to the Christ the Cornerstone church for generously playing host.

We hope it will provide an informal setting to hear **what you've got to say**: an opportunity to share stories and air questions, to exchange ideas and make connections. It's for absolutely everyone linked with the URC in the East Midlands, not just elders or ministers, and we don't stand on ceremony. Anyone who'd like a friendly chat will be welcome: just drop in whenever it suits you between the hours of **2.00pm and 8.00pm**. We'll have a good cup of tea or coffee waiting for you, a quality biscuit or two – and a ready ear.

Thank you for reading this. If anyone would like to take over any of the above research information, please get in touch. I would be most appreciative of the help.
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 the website: [Churches Together in Milton Keynes \(ctmk.church\)](http://ctmk.church)

News from the Partnership Green Champions

Eco Tip for September 2025

Buying Fruits and Vegetables Without Plastic Packaging

Despite countries not being able to agree a Plastic Treaty we can choose to reduce plastic waste by buying fruits and vegetables without or with minimal plastic packaging.
Buying fruits and vegetables in Supermarkets:

Look for items sold loose or packed in card trays or secured with paper tape



Veg Box schemes

Generally, have no or minimal plastic packaging and delivered to your home.

Oddbox: rescues “too wonky” and “too many” direct from farmers to your door.

<https://www.oddbox.co.uk/?srsltid=AfmBOop2sw6zFeX0i2oGHL44SN7hE7UHUWv4JWT-n85f90117OYNEoNk>

Riverford organic fruits and vegetables: supports organic farms growing foods without chemicals or artificial (oil based) fertilizer.

https://www.riverford.co.uk/?srsltid=AfmBOork9v_vH2-rHq_fZZBFTBO_mt0cczdEQmYXe2gZdDF9h0Wbns_s

Local Markets

As long as you have your own bags or stalls use paper bags you can buy plastic free loose vegetables and fruits from local markets. Stony Stratford, Wolverton, Bletchley and CMK all have markets on some weekdays and always on Saturdays.

Wolverton Farmer's Market is held on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month selling locally sourced fruits and vegetables.

I hope that you have found this and previous newsletters interesting and useful. As has been suggested I am trying to cut it down a bit but some items really do need to be printed in full.

If there is anything else you think would make it better or find any glaring omissions, please let your congregation's newsletter editor, Sharron or me know.

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

John

John Porter sepnewsletter9@gmail.com