



Rector
of
The Benefice of
The Brickhills &
Stoke Hammond

Bow Brickhill



Great Brickhill



Little Brickhill



Stoke Hammond

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PREFACE

Preface from Archdeacon Cassa

It is a joy to commend to you this profile of the Benefice of the Brickhills and Stoke Hammond—a place where deep roots of faith meet fresh opportunities for growth and renewal.

Across these four rural parishes, we glimpse something of the enduring strength of the Church of England in village life: churches that have stood for centuries, communities rich in fellowship, and a faithful commitment to worship, service and care for neighbour. Yet this is not a benefice looking only to the past.

Situated alongside the expanding city of Milton Keynes and within a deanery with its full complement of clergy, it stands at a threshold moment—full of promise and gladness.

What is especially encouraging is the Spirit I see at work here: churches working together across parish boundaries; strong relationships with schools; creative community engagement through events, hospitality and outreach; and a desire to grow, particularly among younger generations. There is honesty, too, about the challenges—anxiety about attendance in some places, financial pressures, and the care of historic buildings—but these are calmly held in a spirit of faith and hope.

These churches have been well served by their previous Rector who, upon his retirement, has allowed the gifted laity that bless this Benefice to engage in drafting this profile with commendable zest and good-natured collaboration. It has been an example of best practice, for which I am deeply appreciative. The successful applicant will be too.

The Diocese of Oxford vision invites us to be a more Christ-like Church—contemplative, compassionate and courageous—and I believe this benefice is well placed to respond to that calling.

We now seek a Rector who will join this movement: a pastor, teacher and friend who will encourage, inspire and, yes, stretch these church communities, as together they discern God's future.

I warmly encourage you to consider whether God may be calling you to share in this next chapter of the Benefice story.

The Venerable Cassa Messervy, Archdeacon of Buckingham



INTRODUCTION

We are looking for a new Rector for our benefice, as our current incumbent who has been with us since February 2003 retired on 10th May. The benefice changed from 3 to 4 parishes when our current Rector was appointed. All four of our parishes are rural and next door to each other, with the added benefit of having the ever-growing urban area of Milton Keynes close at hand.

The benefice is located on the southern side of Milton Keynes, which is growing fast with an expected population of 500,000 by 2050. This growth is supported by East-West Rail plans to connect Milton Keynes with Oxford and ultimately Cambridge, in addition to the existing good rail and road communications. Milton Keynes provides many facilities that are not to be found within the villages. For maps of the parishes see Appendix A (page 33).

The benefice lies at the edge of the Diocese of Oxford, sharing its border with the Diocese of St Albans to the south and east. The benefice is within the Mursley Deanery, which is entirely separate from Milton Keynes. To see the location of the benefice see map in Appendix A (page 32).

We are seeking a spiritual leader who is passionate about the mission of rural churches, someone who is approachable and empathetic, with an outgoing personality, an excellent communicator who will like to be visible within the community of all four villages.

THE BENEFICE

(A map of the Benefice can be found in Appendix A, on page 32)

The Location:

The benefice of four rural parishes sits to the south of Milton Keynes and its location is rather complex in nature. Two of the villages, Bow Brickhill and Little Brickhill, lie within the unitary authority of Milton Keynes, while Great Brickhill and Stoke Hammond have Buckinghamshire as its unitary authority.

The benefice lies at the north east boundary of the Mursley Deanery, which is unusual in that it has no urban parishes; it comprises of 19 small rural parishes.

The Four Parishes:

The parishes are rather different from each other, but work together well. Monthly Wardens' meetings are held with the Rector to share news within the parishes and to discuss service planning.

All the parishes have strong ties with their village community and there is a good relationship with the two schools in the Benefice.

Each of the churches have their particular strengths ranging from very high attendance at special services, to highly successful community ties through activities such as Community Breakfasts, and a Community Hall CIO. Detailed information of each parish can be found in the "Our Four Parishes" section on pages 12 to 29.

Services in the Benefice:

A new service pattern for the benefice was implemented in September 2021. The services across the benefice follow a four-month cycle. Every month each of the parishes hold a service of Holy Communion at 9.30am and a Family Service at 11.00am, which are led by the Rector. The exception is when the parish holds the monthly Benefice Service; on those weeks there is no other service held in the benefice.

If there is a fifth Sunday in the month there is an additional Benefice Service held in one of the churches on a rotational basis. These often take the opportunity of holding a different type of service, not always in one of the churches. United Benefice Services are also held on days such as Ash Wednesday.



On other weeks, lay led services are held, the frequency and type of service being decided by each individual parish.

Benefice Choir:

There is a four-part choir of members from across the benefice. The choirmaster plays the organ at one or more of the weekly services. He has led the choir for many years and organises a choir practice on most Monday evenings, either in Great Brickhill Church or, in the winter months, at the Bow Brickhill Community Hall. The choir tend to sing at the Benefice Services and special services, not at the normal weekly services.



Key Statistics:

The key statistics per parish can be found in the following tables:-

Statistics from the APCMs in March 2026				
	Bow <u>Brickhill</u>	Great <u>Brickhill</u>	Little <u>Brickhill</u>	Stoke <u>Hammond</u>
Electoral Roll	15	27	5	20
Wardens	Nil	2	Nil	1
Deanery Synod Representative	1	1	Nil	1
PCC Members	3	3	4	4
Co-opt PCC	1	1	0	2
"Normal" Average Weekly Attendance (adult & children)	9	18.4	12	17
Population (UK Office for National Statistics, June 2024)	691	918	460	1204

Accounts for the year to 31/12/25 - Prepared on a Receipts & Payments Basis				
	Bow <u>Brickhill</u>	Great <u>Brickhill</u>	Little <u>Brickhill</u>	Stoke <u>Hammond</u>
General A/C Surplus/(Deficit) for 2025	(£8,339)	(£1,079)	(£1,346)	(£10,538)
Parish Share due 2025	£11,534	£21,885	£8,981	£17,518
Parish Share Paid 2025	£11,419 (discount DD payment)	£14,000	£1,500	£17,518
% age Paid	100%	64%	16.7%	100%
Benefice Expenses Allocation	26%	31%	17%	26%
General Reserves	£101,001	£13,984	£17,345	£12,434
Restricted/Designated Reserves	£2,325	£2,006	£100,655	£78,070

Benefice Vision:

There is currently no Benefice Vision Statement but we would welcome working on this with our new incumbent. We are aware of the Oxford Diocese vision and would use this as our starting point:-

***Called to be Christ-like
Contemplative, Compassionate, Courageous
for the sake of the world***

What the Benefice will be looking for in our new Rector:-

The opportunities and challenges vary from parish to parish, which are detailed in the individual Parish Section below, but collectively, the common themes that all four parishes will be looking for, is someone who will:

- Engage with the community, actively being involved and joining in village events
- Be dependable for pastoral care, visiting and comforting the elderly, sick, bereaved and lonely
- Embrace the challenge of growing the church, reaching out to draw more people into the church, especially younger people and children
- Encourage all age groups, especially teenagers, having a modern approach with services and sermons relevant to today's society with modern hymns, as well as traditional services
- Have a collaborative approach to leadership, working and communicating with the PCC and wider community
- Be well organised, good at administration, responding to requests in a timely manner, making use of modern technology

What the Benefice Can Offer:-

We have an experienced LLM living in Great Brickhill who regularly takes services across the benefice. He is also able to take funerals where necessary. There are two others in the benefice who regularly take the lay led services.

There is a comprehensive Benefice website which gives full details of all the services and events, and is updated at least two or three times a week as required.

PCCs who work closely with the Rector, and Wardens who work positively together and organize much of the day-to-day running of their parish. There has in the past been an Admin Assistant to help the Rector with general administrative tasks and the benefice would be happy to fund that again.

Good communications links within each of the parishes to spread information widely.

A Lent Group is held each year with two sessions per week, a daytime session in Stoke Hammond and a midweek evening session at various venues in the other three parishes.

A monthly evening Bible Study has been held at the Rectory, exploring the bible passages set for one of the week's services.

A monthly evening Bible Group held in Great Brickhill, open to anyone who would like to attend from within the benefice including those who worship further afield.

A monthly Men's Breakfast with a Christian topic to discuss has been held on a Saturday morning for a number of years at various venues across the benefice.

THE RECTORY



A relatively modern new Rectory is centrally located in the heart of Great Brickhill. A four-bedroom, two-bathroom house with office and garage.



It is intended that refurbishment will be carried out during the interregnum. The running costs for The Rectory:- the average annual total for gas and electricity over the last three years is £1,220 (the water bills are paid direct by the Diocese).



Mobile coverage in the village is patchy but high-speed broadband is available.

There is a bus service from Great Brickhill, consisting of one bus per day during the week to Bletchley and Milton Keynes, but it is clearly essential that the Rector is mobile.

Facilities in the surrounding area include:

Railway stations:	Milton Keynes, Bletchley, Leighton Buzzard (Euston – 30/40minutes)
Bus terminal:	Milton Keynes Coachway (just off M1 – Junction 14)
Airport:	Luton Airport is used mainly by Easyjet and package tour operators and is located about 20 miles south on the M1
Roads:	The M1 is located on the east side of Milton Keynes and has access at junctions 14 (Newport Pagnell) and 13 (Aspley Guise) The A5 cuts through the Benefice and gives access to Dunstable to the South and the Midlands to the North.
Shopping:	Milton Keynes, Bletchley, Leighton Buzzard and Aylesbury
Post Office:	Stoke Hammond, Great Brickhill (Mondays in Parish Hall)
Doctors:	Most GP surgeries in the Bletchley and Leighton Buzzard area, which cover the postcode, are currently accepting new patients
Dentists:	A number of dental surgeries in the Bletchley or Leighton Buzzard area accept new NHS patients when availability allows
Hospitals:	Milton Keynes, Saxon Clinic (Private), Luton, Stoke Mandeville
Theatres:	Milton Keynes, Leighton Buzzard, Northampton, Oxford, Aylesbury
Libraries:	Milton Keynes, Bletchley, Leighton Buzzard, Woburn Sands
Leisure Activities:	In Milton Keynes:- Sixteen and ten screen multiplex cinemas, Xscape Snowdome (a real snow indoor ski slope), ten pin bowling, ice-skating, roller-skating, numerous swimming pool / sports centres / health club complexes. Good local clubs for cricket, hockey, rugby, tennis and football Golf clubs:- Woburn (3 Championship courses), Leighton Buzzard, Aspley Guise and Three Locks Walking with or without dogs, and horse riding are also popular pastimes

SCHOOLS IN THE BENEFICE:

There are two Church of England Controlled Combined schools in the benefice, one in Bow Brickhill, and one in Great Brickhill serving Great Brickhill, Little Brickhill and Stoke Hammond.

The Church is represented on the Board of Governors of both schools, and the Incumbent maintains close liaison with the schools, and has historically been one of the Governors.

Both schools meet at least once a term in the Church for worship. The whole school worships together in the church at Bow Brickhill but, to allow parents to attend, the majority of the Great Brickhill school services are split into one for Key Stage 1 and Foundation on one day, and a second for Key Stage 2 on another day.

From Bow Brickhill Primary School the children tend to go to Walnut High, a short distance away in Milton Keynes. The Senior schools serving Great Brickhill are Cottesloe School in Wing and the three Grammar schools in Aylesbury (Aylesbury Grammar, Aylesbury High or Sir Henry Floyd). There is also a wide choice of private schools in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire within easy reach.

BOW BRICKHILL CofE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Bow Brickhill CofE V.A. Primary School comes under the auspices of The Diocesan Board of Education for Oxford and works in partnership with Milton Keynes Local Authority. Our premises offer a mixture of old and new with the original school, founded in 1887, including a classroom and library as well as the Schoolhouse which includes 2 group rooms and a resource area. A further three classrooms and the hall are located in a modern extension. We are very lucky to have a wonderful outside setting, with playing facilities which include a traversing wall, trim trail and all-weather play area, surrounded by fields and the Bow Brickhill woods.

Recognising our historic foundation, the school works in partnership with The Church at parish and Diocesan level and serves the catchment area of the village of Bow Brickhill as well as the recently developed area of Eaton Leys. As a small school we have mixed age classes with a school admission number of 15 pupils for each year group. We accept children from aged 4 (EYFS) through to age 11 (year 6) and are a popular choice for families within catchment as well as from across Milton Keynes. We currently have 102 children on roll.

At Bow Brickhill CE Primary School, children are at the centre of everything that we do. We believe that every child is different, yet equally important and valued. Our Christian vision is that all members of our school community; grow through faith in God or are inspired by faith to reach our full potential. Our hope is that we are the best that we can be, both now and in the future so that we make a responsible contribution to the world, showing love, patience and kindness to those around us.

‘So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.’
(1 Corinthians 13)

Through our core Christian values of Respect, Responsibility, Kindness, Courage, Honesty and Forgiveness we have created a school that is an integral part of the community and where children are proud of their achievements and excel within a safe, happy and caring environment.

Our exceptionally committed staff recognise the importance of an engaging and challenging curriculum and work hard at providing a community where everyone is respected and listened to. We are proud that our pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour and show respect and responsibility in their interactions with others.

We have very high expectations for everyone and aspire for Bow Brickhill CE Primary School to be an inspirational and exciting place to learn, where children and staff alike are motivated and strive to be the very best that they can be. Through a varied curriculum with high expectations, we aim to enable all our children to reach their full potential, giving them the confidence to explore new things, courage to learn from mistakes as well as the skills and knowledge they need to progress and prepare them for the future challenges and opportunities that life offers.

We very much look forward to working with the new Rector and hope they are equally excited to become a valued part of our school community.

HIGH ASH SCHOOL, GREAT BRICKHILL



High Ash Church of England Primary School is a vibrant, inclusive learning community in the village of Great Brickhill that views every child as a unique gift from God. Our core philosophy is encapsulated in our school motto, "Grow Together, Shine Forever," which is deeply rooted in the biblical mandate of Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine." This vision is not merely a slogan but the heartbeat of our school; we strive to nurture individuals who are not only academically successful, but who also possess a strong moral compass. By fostering an environment where children are encouraged to be the best versions of themselves, we aim to equip them with the spiritual and emotional resilience needed to navigate the modern world with grace and integrity.

Central to our identity is the "Good Samaritan" model of advocacy and compassion. We teach our pupils that being a "High Ash Star" means looking beyond oneself to make a positive difference in the lives of others, reflecting the Church of England's vision for "life in all its fullness." This ethos is woven into the fabric of our daily life through our PROUD principles and our curriculum, where Religious Education is a cornerstone. We encourage our children to ask "big questions," engaging in respectful dialogue about faith and ethics. By practicing restorative approaches inspired by Christian principles of forgiveness and reconciliation, we ensure that our school remains a sanctuary of mutual respect where every member of our community feels valued and supported.



We are a school that deeply prizes its partnership with the local church and the Oxford Diocese. We maintain strong, active links with the three churches in our catchment, with our children regularly leading worship for Harvest, Christmas, and Easter, and receiving a

special Year Six Leavers' Blessing to mark their transition. We view the local incumbent as a vital partner in our mission, collaborating on projects that extend our "light" beyond the school gates—such as our community outreach for the elderly and our support for the local food bank. We would like a spiritual leader who will walk alongside us, enriching our collective worship and helping us to continue building a firm foundation of faith for our children, staff, and families.

OUR FOUR PARISHES

(A map of the parishes can be found in Appendix A, on page 33)

ALL SAINTS CHURCH - BOW BRICKHILL



Introduction to the Village

“There stand three Brickhills all in a row;
Great Brickhill, Little Brickhill and Brickhill with the Bow”.

Nestling in the curve of the Greensand Ridge, Bow Brickhill is a friendly village and civil parish in the unitary authority area of the City of Milton Keynes. The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book as ‘Brichelle’ and in the twelfth century it was referred to as ‘Bolle Brichelle’.

The village is fortunate in having two halls which are widely used by both residents and others from outside the village. The Pavilion is used regularly for club and society meetings, exercise and yoga, prayer group and party bookings. It is also the site for Village Fayres at Christmas and summer times and where the Church holds its annual Autumn Bazaar. The Pavilion has its own large car park and includes football pitches, a picnic area, an outdoor exercise area and a children’s play area.

The second one is our stunning new Community Hall which was built in 2021 to replace the old Church Hall from 1898 which had become unsafe. The building consists of a main hall and separate meeting room with a children’s play area to one side and a ‘quiet garden’ at the other. It is built on land belonging to Bow Brickhill Parochial Church Council and provides a community facility for the social, leisure and educational interests of the residents of Bow Brickhill and the surrounding area. Like the original hall it was funded by the generosity of the community.

During weekdays the main hall is occupied by Ducklings Preschool, which was rated 'Outstanding' in a recent OFSTED inspection. All Saints' Lunch Club, providing a two-course meal for elderly residents or those on their own, takes place there on the second Sunday of the month and a weekly 'Drop In' on Wednesday afternoons.

The hall is also used by Bow Brickhill Brownies; the History Society; various village clubs and exercise classes; the Polymnia choir and Family Services. It makes a wonderful venue for social events and can be rented for private parties by villagers or those from further afield.



Our popular village pub is The Wheatsheaf, which was proud to be crowned Milton Keynes Pub of the Year in 2024. They use locally sourced ingredients in the kitchen, hold quiz nights and speciality events and offer a warm and inviting atmosphere and a lovely outdoor terrace for finer days. The pub is where we hold our carol singing evening in December!

Next door to the pub we have Hornes, our very own micro-brewery which opened in 2015, using only quality, natural ingredients. The brewery holds open days and events for the village on their land and regularly supplies the bar for many social occasions.

In 2024 the population of the village was recorded as 691 but, with the development of new housing on Station Road, this has recently increased. There are future plans for a major development of 1,300 homes to the south of the village being part of a larger 3,000 home expansion which would include schools, healthcare facilities and local centres, as part of the MK2050 local plan.

The Marston Vale Train Line, from Bletchley to Bedford, stops at Bow Brickhill with trains running from Monday-Saturday. There is also a loop bus service to Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes and Bletchley which has five stops in the village.

We have no village shop but Woburn Sands with its High Street of varied shops and restaurants is about two miles away and several popular supermarkets are a short drive away in Bletchley. The major shopping areas of MK1 (at the Football Stadium) and Central Milton Keynes are easily reached by car or bus.

History of the Church

Our lovely, Grade 2 listed, woodland Church of All Saints' has been standing proudly on the hill-top ridge above the village, surrounded by the beautiful trees of Bow Brickhill Woods, since the 12th century. The first record of a church on this site dates back to 1185 although its structure now is primarily 15th century, with most earlier details hidden.



In 1628 new timbers were put in the tower to support the ring of four bells but the church became sadly dilapidated and was disused for almost 150 years until 1756 when it was restored. Unfortunately, the framework in the bell tower is now such poor condition that it is unsafe to ring the bells although three of them can still be chimed.

The artist, Thomas Webster's, most famous painting from 1847, "A Village Choir" in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, is said to have been inspired by a visit to Bow Brickhill Church and the characters based on the villagers. A copy hangs in the church.



Sir Sydney Nicholson, founder of The Royal School of Church Music, brought his Choristers from Westminster Abbey here for a summer camp and to perform in the church in 1923. Inspired by what he described as “the idyllic little church” he composed the hymn tune “Bow Brickhill”, which is most commonly used for the Passiontide hymn “We sing the praise of him who died”, with words by Thomas Kelly. He lived in Harley House on Church Road for some time.

The Church Today

At present we have no Church Warden as our Warden, who had served for decades, sadly died last year. We currently have three members on the PCC together with a Synod Rep and co-opted Treasurer. 15 parishioners are registered on the electoral roll – three living outside the parish.

Our general service pattern is to hold a Family Service (usually in the Community Hall) on the first Sunday, a Holy Communion Service on the third Sunday and an Evensong or Mattins Service on the fourth Sunday. This year we have begun offering a Taizé Service to replace some Mattins, using songs from the Taizé Community with a pattern of prayer shaped by singing and silence.

We hold special services at Harvest, Remembrance, Advent, Christmas and Easter. We also held a ‘Songs of Praise’ Service in July and occasional other services based on particular events. We hope these ‘special services’ may appeal to people who don’t attend church on a regular basis as our usual Sunday attendance is nine people and numbers have been gradually falling over the past few years.



The Benefice Choir meets for weekly practises and sings at Easter, Christmas and some Sunday services and supports the congregation in singing the Taizé songs.

This year we have completed substantial repairs to the main roof and smaller repairs to the tower roof. This was expensive but vital and we obtained a grant to reclaim VAT.

Internally the paint is peeling quite badly but, once the walls have dried out, we can start looking at repainting. Covers have recently been installed over the heaters in the main part of the church for safety and we intend to complete the coverage of the heaters at the back and side of the church.

In the churchyard a hedge has been planted in place of a fallen fence, and we intend to fix up the gateposts and steps which were broken and uneven. We have also ordered a new notice board to replace the very dilapidated one in the churchyard.

The PCC owns the new Community Hall, rebuilt in 2020-21 and run by a Management Committee which is a subcommittee of the PCC. The PCC have been working with a group of residents who are forming a new organisation, the Bow Brickhill Community Trust CIO to manage the hall on behalf of the community. We have agreed to lease the hall to the new CIO for eighty years in exchange for which the CIO will run the hall to benefit the people of Bow Brickhill and the church will continue to use it for services and meetings.

We hire the church to the Romanian Orthodox church of St. Cyprian and St. Justina. They hold one service a week as well as occasional special services and have helped us with minor repairs to the building and maintenance of the churchyard. We have just finalised a five-year agreement with them rather than the rolling agreement with three months' notice which we were originally operating. Their rental covers all the heating and cleaning costs and contributes to the cost of insurance.



2025 Highlights and Difficulties

Highlights:

- The Heritage Open Day, which saw a lot of visitors to the Church for tea and cake with the opportunity to climb the church tower and admire the wonderful view.
- Finally getting the roof repaired and watertight.
- Success of the weekly Drop In with lots of people attending. It really feels that it's doing something very positive for the community.
- The Taizé services are very special and becoming popular.
- The Remembrance Day Service at the War Memorial, with Woburn Sands Band and Benefice Choir which was attended by a lot of villagers.

Difficulties:

- With no Church Warden and no secretary administration is getting trickier. We are covering most of the Warden's responsibilities collectively and outside help with the minutes is appreciated.
- Difficulty of access to and inside the church for the elderly and those with mobility problems.
- Lack of enthusiasm from the village for regular churchyard maintenance.

- Poor communication in responding to questions about church procedures such as baptisms, wedding banns, memorial headstones etc.
- Lack of mains water to the church.

Vision for 2/3 Years Time. (What are the priorities for the New Rector?)

Together with the points common to the whole benefice as laid out on Page 7, a particular suggestion from our aging congregation was to hold regular Holy Communion in the Hall or home (possibly on weekdays) for those who cannot get to church.

St MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH - GREAT BRICKHILL



The Village:

The history of Great Brickhill is thought to date back to the Saxon period when the Romans left Britain from 400 AD. With its hilltop position and clear views of the surrounding area it would have been a typical site for a Saxon settlement. Great Brickhill is mentioned in the Domesday Book, drawn up by William the Conqueror in 1086, the village then known as Brichella.

Great Brickhill also featured in the English Civil War in 1643, when a large force of the Earl of Essex's troops were positioned at the top of the ridge waiting for the King's forces to arrive. The Earl of Essex stayed in the village at Cromwell Cottages during the war; the cottage is still inhabited today.

Great Brickhill and its farms retain all the qualities of an old rural community with a blacksmith and a pub. A significant number have used it as a dormitory village for nearby Milton Keynes or London, and since Covid there are now a large number who work from home for at least part of the week. There is very much a village atmosphere with a good mix of both age and social groups.

There is a Parish Hall within the centrally located Recreation Area which also houses the cricket field and modern clubhouse, tennis courts and children's play area. This whole site provides excellent facilities for the many activities which are held in the village. Little Ashes

Pre School use the Parish Hall every day. Groups such as the Women's Institute, table tennis, badminton, yoga use the Hall on a regular basis.

A separate Committee Room is used for a weekly Post Office Service and a Drop-in set up many years ago by a former Rector, is held on Monday afternoons. The upstairs room has recently been converted to house "Celia's Café" which is open most days.

We endeavour to make the church a vibrant centre of the community. There is a very good relationship between the Cricket Club and the church, and they kindly host some of our outdoor events. Some of the larger church events are held in the Parish Hall.

Great Brickhill was the largest of the four parishes in terms of a population, but the village has not increased in size very much, there have been no major housing developments, in recent years. A Neighbourhood Plan has been drawn up and there is the possibility of a small development on the outskirts of the village.

The Great Brickhill Charity:

The Great Brickhill Charitable Trust is an established Trust that has been working in the village for many decades. The Trust is funded through donated investments and land and has an income that enables it to meet its mandate. There are currently seven Trustees, one of whom also acts as clerk. The principle of the Trust is to support villagers (within the registered curtilage of the village) who are experiencing hardship, distress, and/or sadness. The Rector has always been a Trustee, and this requires a few commitments including attendance at two Trust Meetings per annum and reviewing suggested donations to villagers who are recognised as potential recipients..

History of the Church

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, now the only place of worship in the village, dates from the mid thirteenth century and is a Grade 2* listed building. The north and south aisles were added to the chancel, nave and central tower in the C15. The south porch was added when the whole church was heavily restored in 1856-7.

There are many fine features within the church. It can seat over 275 people and has a very fine Hills organ, and a very good sound enhancement system.

There were six bells up to October 2009 when the bells were removed and taken to Whites of Appleton for restoration. The tower was strengthened and a new eight-bell cast iron frame was installed. In 2010 the six bells were re-hung, along with two new bells that were cast by Whitechapel Bell Foundry where the existing six bells were cast.

St Mary's church is the largest of the four churches in the Benefice. A new extension was added at the west end of the church in 2021, housing a lobby area and two toilets. At the same time a refreshment area was installed in the south west corner of the church. The facilities are totally accessible for wheelchairs.



The south and north aisles roofs were renovated and new lead laid in 2008. There were multiple thefts of lead and in 2014 it had all been stolen. A temporary covering of felt was laid but that failed causing water ingress and internal damage. In 2024 a permanent covering of terne coated steel was laid and other work carried out to the roof and tower. The damage to the ceiling panels was repaired and all the internal walls were re-painted, with the result that the church is in excellent condition.



The cost of the new facilities £202K plus the recent roof repairs £156K required significant fund raising. Grant applications were very successful making the work possible, helped hugely by being identified by the National Churches Trust as one of 18 churches in the country to benefit from a special “Last Chance Churches” appeal fund.

The church yard is closed but there is a large cemetery opposite the church, which is run by the Church but is maintained by, and the responsibility of, the Parish Council.



Our current project is for Net Zero Carbon and plans are being drawn up to install an air source heat pump to replace the very old gas boiler. Identified by the Diocese as being one of the highest user of carbon we have received a grant towards the preparatory work. Applications for planning permission and a faculty, plus grant applications to carry out the work will be submitted in the next few weeks. A second phase will be to install solar panels and batteries.

Following an extensive thermal audit, significant work has already taken place to reduce the heat loss from the church. Plans have been drawn up to replace the metal birdgate at the main south porch entrance with new part glazed oak doors.

Use of the Church

The church is open for visitors every day from 10am to 4pm.

In the porch there is a Food Box for those who find themselves in need of basic food. It is accessible 24 hours a day.

With fibre optic broadband in the church and the new facilities, the refreshment area is an ideal place for meetings and other gatherings, such as Wardens' meetings and coffee mornings. A Baby & Toddler group is being launched on Monday mornings from 20th April.

Service Pattern:

In addition to the Holy Communion and Family Services which are led by the Rector, most months there will be a lay led service. The organ is played at most of the services, but a worship group provides the music for our Family Services.

While the average "normal weekly attendance" figure of 18 has been gradually decreasing, the average for "special services" is very encouraging – 57 in 2025. These services vary but include outdoor services, which are very popular, Palm Sunday Procession, Pimms & Hymns, The Village Nativity (an enactment of the Christmas story held at the Cricket Club with 200 attending).



The most popular service in the church is the Christmas Eve Carol Service where there is standing room only, typically attended by over 300 people.

Communication:

The services and other events are publicised widely:

- On notice boards at the church
- On the Benefice website
- In the Pew Sheet distributed at each service
- Weekly e-mails to those on the data base (105)
- In the monthly Parish Newsletter, which includes a message from the Rector
- Village WhatsApp group (circulation 340)

Policy Documents:

All Policy documents are on display in the church porch and in the Great Brickhill section of the website. Safeguarding is an item on the agenda for every PCC meeting, a subject taken very seriously.

Fundraising Activities:

Our two major fundraising activities are held in the first part of the year, Snowdrop Walks on two Sunday afternoons in the neighbouring Manor Park followed by teas in the church, and a Plant Fayre on a Sunday in April at the Parish Hall.



Other activities include teas at Brickstock, the village music festival and a Christmas Coffee Morning in the church. As well as raising funds a key focus for our activities is to hold events where there is a good atmosphere and fellowship.



Highlights & Challenges:

A few of the recent highlights are:

- The very good attendance at special services attracting many young families, especially The Nativity
- Confirmation service on 4th January for three local candidates when Bishop Dave made his first visit to the Benefice
- The request to re-start the weekly Baby & Toddler Group in the church, which ceased in January last year due to lack of young babies in the village



Difficulties encountered are mainly concerned with finance, specifically our lack of ability to pay the full amount of the Parish Share. Our allocation of Parish Share within the Benefice is disproportionately high. While a few years ago this was not a problem as we had some very generous benefactors, but sadly, that is no longer the case. In addition, any extra

fundraising has had to concentrate on raising funds for our new facilities and roof repairs. The Diocese is aware and sympathetic to our situation.

An immediate challenge is to proceed as quickly as possible with the installation of the heat pump as described above, as the boiler has now broken down terminally.

Vision for 2/3 Years Time. (Priorities for the new Rector)

In common with the other three churches, our priorities for our new Rector are outlined on Page 7. We would like someone who will engage well with the community and take on the challenge of pastoral visits to the sick and needy, while at the same time seeking to grow the church here. An additional priority will be to have more involvement with the school.

St MARY MAGDALENE CHURCH – LITTLE BRICKHILL



Little Brickhill

St Mary Magdalene Church is set in the heart of the small village of Little Brickhill, a beautiful rural location, while being only a few minutes' drive from the city of Milton Keynes. We have a pub that serves meals and a community centre that hosts a variety of activities. The village is also home to a hairdresser and various small business units at George Farm. There is a very active Residents Association who organise events for the village residents, and who support the activities and the fundraising efforts of the church.



St Mary Magdalene Church

St Mary Magdalene church is in a very prominent position at the centre of the village. The building dates from the 14th century but was restored in Victorian times. There is some medieval graffiti, an ancient leper's squint, and a font, parts of which date from the 12th century. The building is in generally reasonable condition, although the upkeep of such an old building is not always easy or affordable. The lack of water and wheelchair accessibility are both issues that we would like to resolve in the long term.



The Congregation and PCC

We do not currently have a church warden, but we have a strong team of four members of the PCC who each give a lot of time and energy to support the running of the church. Other members of the parish help out and run some of our activities such as our Christmas fair and churchyard "Weed and Feed".



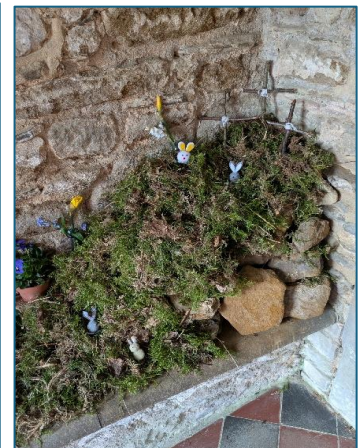
Our average congregation size is about 12 people. The village Carol service is very well attended, with about 170 people squeezing into the church in December 2025.

We usually manage to keep our income and expenditure at a similar level, and we contribute as much parish share as we are able to each year. There is little or no surplus funds, so we unfortunately have to use our savings to pay for unexpected purchases, such as the recent need for a new boiler. The Spurgin Trust was set up a long time ago; the Rector is usually a signatory for the trust. The PCC can ask the trustees for a small grant to improve the fabric of the church, but can only use the interest, not the capital.

Services and Activities

Each month we hold an all-age family service at 11am. There is a core group of regular attendees which includes a few teenagers, and occasionally a few children. Refreshments are enjoyed after the services and they are friendly, welcoming occasions. A few times a year we hold benefice services for all four parishes, and these often involve communion.

At Easter we have a special service that includes the all-important components of communion and chocolate. The children of the village create an Easter garden in the church porch each Good Friday, complete with a miniature cave which is empty when the stone is rolled away on Easter morning.



Other highlights of the year usually include services for Mothering Sunday, Harvest, Remembrance Sunday and All Souls, a beautiful service during which we remember and celebrate the lives of loved ones.

Our Christmas carol service is always very well attended, and the children of the village take part enthusiastically. Each year we hold a church spring clean, and also a 'Weed and Feed' during which we tidy and maintain the churchyard. Both events are well supported by members of the village, including many who do not regularly attend the services.



Where we are in 2026

2025 was a generally positive year for our church, with the PCC and other members of the village community working hard to hold welcoming services in a delightful and well-maintained church. We are concerned about the small size of the congregation, and our precarious financial situation, but we are looking forwards to the future in a positive and prayerful way.



What are the priorities for the New Rector?

We would like our Rector to focus on the common themes mentioned in the Benefice section on Page 7. In addition, we would like our new Rector to take an interest in the long-term survival of our church building and fabric.

We are excited to be welcoming a new Rector to our church and are looking forward to working with them.

St LUKE'S CHURCH – STOKE HAMMOND



Introduction to the Village:

Stoke Hammond is a historical English village and civil parish, pleasantly situated on the Grand Union Canal, in the north of the county of Buckinghamshire. It is one of the 53 "Thankful Villages" which lost no men in World War I, (as first identified by the writer Arthur Mee in the 1930s), and is the only such Thankful Village in Buckinghamshire.



The civil Parish includes part of the Newton Leys development (an extension of Milton Keynes), but the church Parish excludes this, and has a population which has grown significantly in recent years to approximately 1200 – far cry from that recorded in the Domesday Book where it was numbered as 12 villagers, 4 smallholders and 6 slaves. A Neighbourhood Plan has recently been agreed and this should influence future development.

One of the central features of the village is the Queen Anne style manor house, Tyrells Manor, built on the site of a manor house going back to the thirteenth century. The current owners are very supportive of the church and we have held afternoon teas in the grounds twice and are considering a stargazing evening in October 2026.



There is a busy village store and Post Office, which serves customers from across the benefice, and a thriving public house, the Dolphin, which reopened in 2021 and has a fine reputation for food attracting visitors to the village from miles around. A twenty-minute walk along the Canal brings one to a further public house and restaurant the Three Locks, which as its name suggests sits right on the canal on the opposite side from the Three Locks Golf Club. This is one of several lovely walks that can be done around or from the village. A twenty-minute walk following the canal in the opposite direction reaches the Lindens residential care home, where a choir including people from our churches has sometimes sung for the residents at Christmas.

There are two garages serving the village MD Autocare and Southlands Autocentre. Outside the Village Store there is a small village green which is used for St Luke's annual plant sale and our usual Christmas Carols on the Green event.

Primary age children mainly attend the school in Great Brickhill and with Buckinghamshire having a selective system for secondary schools older children mainly attend grammar schools in Aylesbury or Cottesloe school in Wing.

A pre-school operates in the Community Centre, purchased by the village Community Association following a major fundraising campaign in the mid-late 1990s, and now run by a management committee of the Association. Other groups meeting in the centre include a toddler group, Scouts and Cubs, Pilates and Yoga groups. St Luke's occasionally run services in the community centre, rather than the church building and regularly hire it for events, such as our monthly Community Breakfast, harvest lunch and Fetes and Fayres.



The Community Association also produces a bi-monthly magazine Stoke Hammond News, which contains a two-page church update and a thought piece produced by the Rector.

Across the road from the Community Centre the Sports Club has football, cricket, darts and Pool teams and is often open for members to socialise at evenings and weekends. On Wednesdays there is a coffee morning, carried forward from the former Methodist Chapel and typically attended by 20-30 of our older residents.

History of the Church:



St Luke's is a small but beautiful and welcoming church with a small regular congregation, well suited for marriage celebrations and funerals.

A Church was originally erected on the site in the 10th century and while it was rebuilt in the 17th century, some traces of the original building remain, including important medieval stained glass windows. It is one of only three cruciform churches in Buckinghamshire.

There are three bells and a Sanctus bell, which are not rung for health and safety reasons.

A replacement 'refurbished' organ was installed at the NW corner of the church and the weakened floor in the South Transept was repaired and a small tea making/refreshment area installed, which is invaluable for Café Church services and events held in the church, as well as post-service coffees.

More recently an outside toilet and store cupboard were constructed and the Church path repaired with new exterior lighting added.

A food bank and toy swap are available in the church porch and the food bank in particular is well used.

Church Information:

Services and other information

Aside from the cross-Benefice services which take place once or twice a month Stoke Hammond has a service every Sunday, sometimes led by the Rector and sometimes with the help of lay leadership. Each month there is usually at least one service of Holy Communion, one Morning Worship and one Family Service. Several months of the year we also have a more informal Café Church service.

Occasionally services are held in the Community Centre rather than St Luke's. Other one off service variations include flowers given on Mothering Sunday, Healing Prayers for St Luke's Day, Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday, where we alternate with other churches in the benefice, and we hold an annual Carol Singing event on the Village Green.

There is a small prayer group which meets twice monthly in a private house, and members of the church attend the benefice Bible Study and Lent Groups. The Lent course always includes one weekly lunchtime/early afternoon session in the village with a soup lunch and other refreshments. We have previously run 'Alpha' and 'Introduction to Christianity' courses in the village.

We are grateful for the attendance of the Benefice Choir regularly at benefice services and sometimes for Parish special services e.g. Carol Service. We also appreciate the efforts of the benefice music director and the times he plays the organ for us.

Communication and outreach activities are led by our 'Making Ourselves Known Group', which organises Prayer Walks around the village two or three times a year, and brings people into the church for monthly afternoon teas once a month in the warmer months.

The main channels for communication used by the church are the village magazine, village facebook group, other facebook groups covering Milton Keynes (and parts of), Benefice Website, an email distribution group, two or three times a year leaflets advertising services or events to all houses in the village, posters at events such as the community breakfast, and (prior to the Summer Fete) a door to door collection of tombola/bric-a-brac which is a useful face to face touchpoint.

The church maintains an active fundraising programme. A regular event of note is our monthly Community Breakfast held on the second Saturday of each month.



This has been running for over ten years and regularly attracts 60-80 people of all ages and backgrounds who are invited to make a donation if they wish. Many of the supplies for the breakfast are donated or supplied at a substantial discount by local businesses. This vibrant and thriving event places the church (in the sense of the body not the building) at the heart of the community and helps us to maintain a good network of people who will help run or attend events, even though most do not attend church regularly, or at all.

2025 highlights and challenges:

- A Palm Sunday parade through the village was well attended
- A new mower was procured and used by a kind volunteer to mow the churchyard
- There was a positive vibe about and good numbers for the 2025 Christmas services and events
- Highlight of our fundraising programme included Plants on the Green, Afternoon Tea at Tyrells Manor, the Summer Fete, a Beetle Drive, the Christmas Fayre and a Christmas Tree Festival in St Luke's
- There have and continue to be building maintenance issues and a concern regarding the churchyard wall
- Congregation numbers are steady or falling slightly and the increasing average age (for general services) and lack of people willing or able to take on PCC/admin roles, is a worry
- Achieving break-even Finances and meeting the Parish Share are a year by year challenge

Where do we want to be?

While not having a detailed or formally approved statement the PCC have been working on how we see ourselves and where we want to be in two-three years.

Mission:

To bring the love of Jesus to the community in Stoke Hammond.

Vision:

To nurture and grow the number of people attending the church, increasing the number of younger people; and to increase the use of the church building for events to draw in the wider community.

In this context as well as the general benefice asks for our new Rector as laid out on Page 7, we would particularly hope that they will be an inspiring teacher, both in their sermons and in informal settings such as study groups.

THE DEANERY

Mursley Deanery

Mursley Deanery serves a wide area of north Buckinghamshire, stretching from Little Horwood in the north-west down to Ivinghoe in the south-east. It sits on the edge of the diocese, bordering neighbouring dioceses and encompassing a network of villages, farmland, and growing communities.

There are **19 Parishes grouped into 4 Benefices**, reflecting a pattern of collaboration across parishes while maintaining strong local identities.

Life and structure

Within the Diocese of Oxford, there has been a deliberate move to **devolve significant responsibility to deaneries**—entrusting them to deliver diocesan strategy and shape their life and witness in ways that fit their local context.

Landscape and setting

This deanery is shaped by its **rural setting**, with small villages, historic parish churches, and landscapes that encourage a slightly-slower - and certainly more community-focused - way of life. This context informs both worship and mission.

Culture and vision

Here in Mursley we have experienced **significant change**, with a **complete turnover of clergy in the past four years**, bringing both challenge and fresh opportunity for renewal & growth.

The deanery's thoughts about shared vision are still forming and any new Incumbent could certainly expect to play a part in developing this. However, a strong theme that has emerged so far is the concept of **"letting our light shine"**— a commitment to reflecting something of Christ's goodness and grace in each of our communities.

Key themes include:

- Building a **supportive and collaborative culture** among clergy and laity
- **Respecting boundaries and differences**, recognising and valuing the identity and tradition of each Parish.
- **Emphasising the importance of prayer and worship as a basis for our mission and pastoral care.**

In practice, this means:

- Clergy and licensed ministers meet not only in **formal Chapter meetings** but also more informally (including **pub lunches**) for encouragement and support
- And the **Deanery Synod** meets regularly – often with guest speakers whom (it is hoped) will inspire and edify clergy and laity alike!

Rev. James Grainger-Smith
Area Dean of Mursley

OXFORD DIOCESE

The Diocese of Oxford serves the mission of the Church in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Diocese comprises more than 600 parishes, with over 800 churches, serving a diverse population of more than 2 million people located in all types of settings.

Due to the size and complexity of the Diocese, we have three Area Bishops who exercise considerable strategic and pastoral oversight for their Areas. The Bishop of Buckingham, the Rt Rev'd Dave Bull, was consecrated Bishop in Lent 2025. The collation of the Rev'd Cassa Messervy as Archdeacon of Buckingham took place on St David's day, 2026. In September 2020 the Rev'd Canon Chris Bull was appointed Associate Archdeacon of Buckingham.

Through prayer, listening and discernment a [common vision has emerged for the Diocese of Oxford](#). The vision is based on the qualities described in The Beatitudes and addresses what kind of church we are called to be:

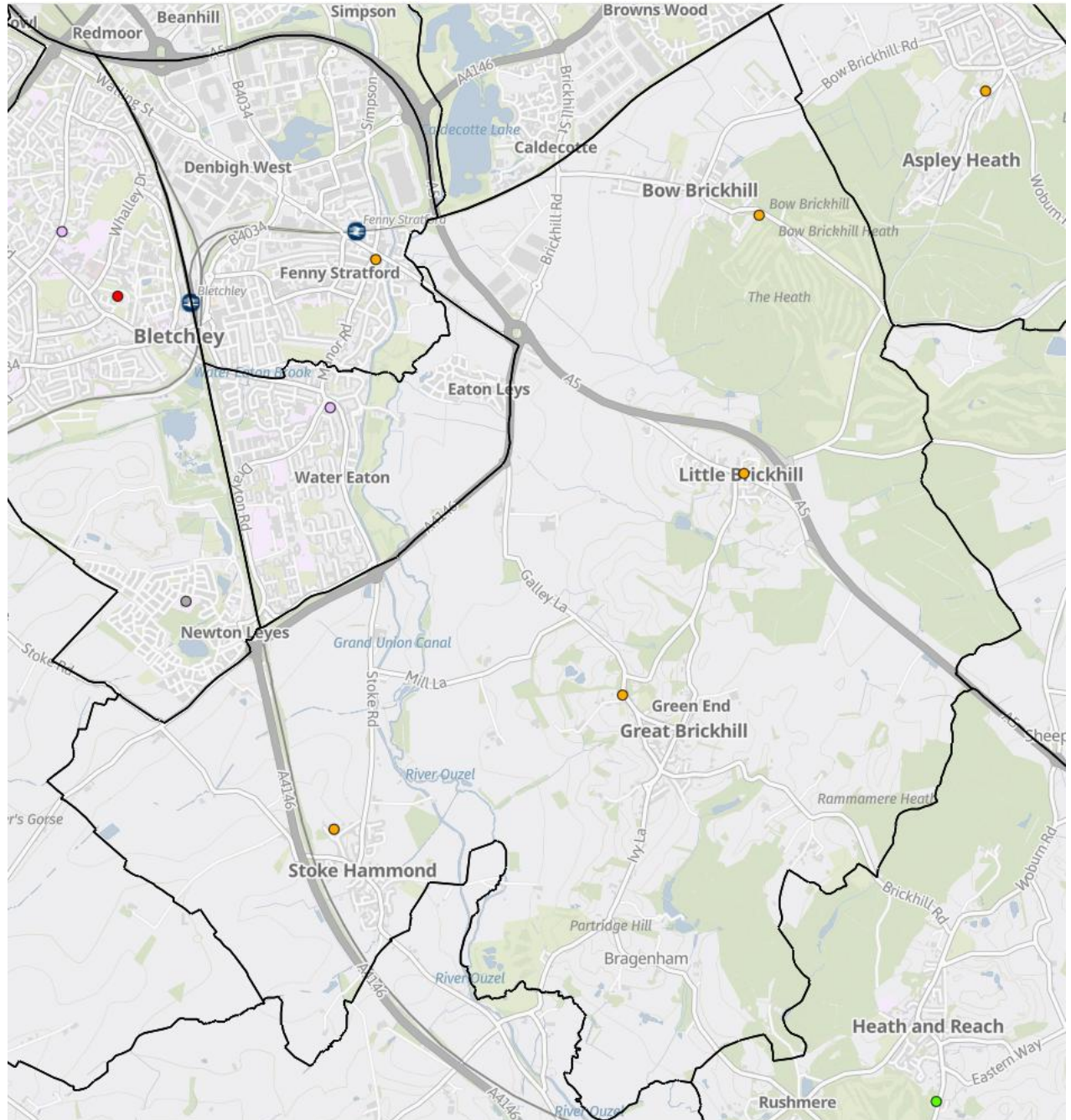
**a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world:
contemplative, compassionate, courageous.**

Our Common Vision continues to emerge as we identify together areas of our common life where we believe God is calling to focus. The [diocesan focal areas](#) are not a description of everything we do, but these priorities are being supported centrally by resources, training, conferences, workshops, and much more. The diocese is inviting benefices and their clergy to share a vision rather than demanding a response, motivated by hope not driven by anxiety, and thereby to flourish in their ministry. It is hoped that clergy appointed into the Archdeaconry of Buckingham will want to commit to this vision and encourage their benefice to share in becoming a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world.

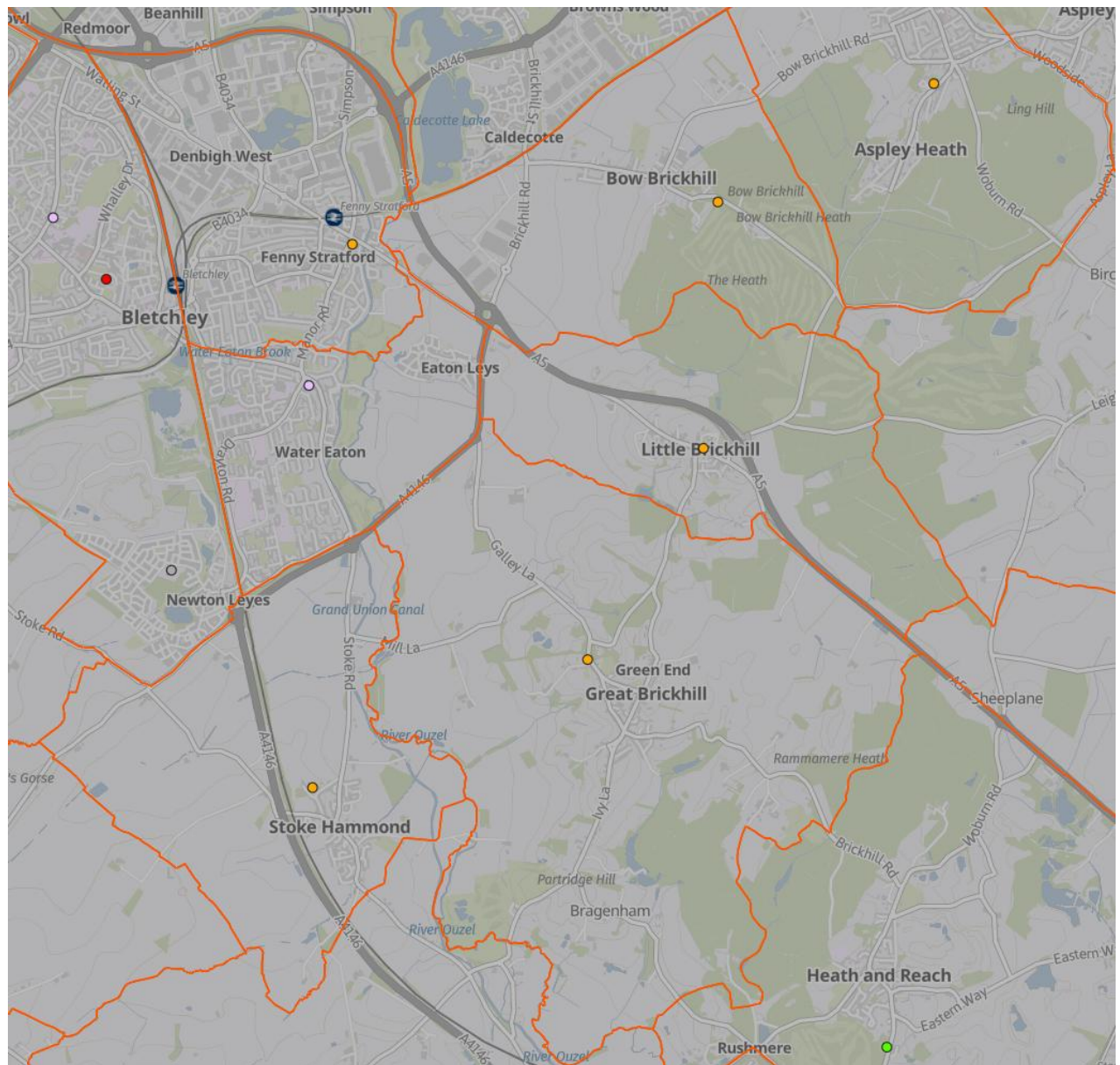
APPENDIX A

MAPS:

Map of the Benefice:-



Map of the Parishes:-



APPENDIX B

PROVISIONAL ROLE DESCRIPTION

The following provisional role description will apply from the date of licensing. It will be reviewed by the postholder and the Archdeacon of Buckingham approximately six months after the date of licensing. Amendments will be made where necessary, by agreement.

SECTION ONE: DETAILS OF POST

Role title:	Rector
Type of Role:	Full time stipendiary
Name of benefice:	The Brickhills and Stoke Hammond
Episcopal area:	Buckingham
Deanery:	Mursley
Archdeaconry:	Buckingham
Conditions of Service	Please refer to Statements of Particulars document issued in conjunction with this role description
Key contact for	Archdeacon of Buckingham
Clergy Terms of Service:	This role falls within the Clergy Terms of Service formally known as Common Tenure. The Archdeacon of Buckingham is the designated person by the Bishop of Oxford to issue the Statement of Particulars for the post holder.
Accountability:	Priests share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church. Whilst, as an office holder, the individual is expected to lead and prioritise work in line with the purpose of the role, they are encouraged to inform the Archdeacon and Churchwardens about any issues exceptional or otherwise that have the potential to affect ongoing delivery of ministry
Additional Responsibility:	Trusteeships – see Parish Profile re Great Brickhill and Little Brickhill

SECTION TWO: CONTEXT

Wider Context

The Diocese of Oxford serves the mission of the Church in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Diocese comprises more than 600 parishes, with over 800 churches, serving a diverse population of more than 2 million people located in all types of settings.

Our Common Vision is based on the qualities described in The Beatitudes and addresses what kind of church we are called to be:

**a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world:
contemplative, compassionate, courageous.**

It is hoped that all clergy appointed into the Archdeaconry of Buckingham will want to commit to the [Diocesan Common Vision](#), to encouraging their benefices to share in becoming a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world and to [enabling all to flourish in ministry](#).

Local Context

See the parish profile.

SECTION THREE: ROLE PURPOSE AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

General:

- A. To exercise the cure of souls shared with the bishop in this benefice in collaboration with colleagues, including the praying of the Daily Office, the administration of the sacraments and preaching
- B. To have regard to the calling and responsibilities of the clergy (as described in the Canons, the Ordinal, the Code of Professional Conduct for the Clergy) and other relevant legislation including
 - bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making him known to those in your care
 - instructing the parishioners in the Christian faith
 - preparing candidates for baptism and confirmation
 - diligently visiting the parishioners of the benefice, particularly those who are sick and infirm
 - providing spiritual counsel and advice
 - consulting with the Parochial Church Council on matters of general concern and importance to the benefice
 - bringing the needs of the world before God in intercession
 - calling your hearers to repentance and declaring in Christ's name the absolution and forgiveness of their sins
 - blessing people in God's name
 - preparing people for their death
 - discerning and fostering the gifts of all God's people
 - being faithful in prayer, expectant and watchful for the signs of God's presence, as he reveals his kingdom among us
- C. To share in the wider work of the deanery and diocese as appropriate, for the building up of the whole Body of Christ

Key responsibilities specific to the local situation

- To be creative in making the Gospel accessible to people from sizeable groups of different cultures, a largely younger demographic and a wide variety of backgrounds.
- To work alongside the Strategic Development Fund Team in its final phase, to make the most of the investment for the Deanery and the Parish.
- To lead change within the Parish, particularly in the areas of safeguarding, outreach, and discipleship.
- To effectively manage people, governance and finances within the Parish.

Other responsibilities

- Participate in the Bishop's Ministerial Development Review scheme and engage in Continuing Ministerial Development
- Carry out any other duties and responsibilities as required in line with the benefice needs.
- Take care for their wellbeing including health and safety and building a good repertoire of spiritual and psychological strategies

SECTION FOUR: BENEFICE SUMMARY

The Benefice of

Benefice: The Brickhills and Stoke Hammond

Patron(s): The Bishop of Oxford

Sir David Pauncefort-Duncombe, Baronet

The Governors of St. Edward's School, Oxford

The Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Cambridge

PCCs: 4

DCCs: 0

Churchwardens: See Profile

Benefice paid staff: See Profile

Benefice unpaid staff/ volunteers: See Profile

Buildings: 5

Churchyards: See Profile

Church Tradition: See Profile

Pastoral Reorganisation proposals: None

For more detailed information, see the parish profile.

SECTION FIVE: KEY CONTACTS FOR THE ROLE

Generic and specific to the role

Groups & committees

- The PCCs
- Deanery Chapter
- Deanery Synod
- Deanery Pastoral Committee

In the benefice

- Churchwardens
- Ministerial Colleagues
- Head teachers of local schools

Support structures

- Area Dean
- Area Bishop
- Area Archdeacon
- Spiritual director, work consultant, etc
- Staff at The Diocesan Office with key responsibilities for various aspects of supporting

SECTION SIX: OTHER

This role description is issued alongside and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

The Ordinal

The Canons of the Church of England

Guidance for the Professional Conduct of Clergy

Bishop's Licence

Statement of Particulars issued to the office-holder on successful appointment

Diocesan Clergy Handbook

Parish Profile

Ministry Action Plans (MAPs)

Any objectives discussed and agreed between the post holder and the supervising minister

Role description signed off by: The Venerable Cassa Messervy, Archdeacon of Buckingham

Date: 11th May 2026

To be reviewed next on: A date around 6 months from licensing