The Benefice of Ellesborough, The Kimbles and Stoke Mandeville seeks a House for Duty Interim Priest

Statement of Needs and Traditions

Introduction
Thank you for your interest in the role of House for Duty Interim Priest-in-Charge of the Benefice of Ellesborough, The Kimbles and Stoke Mandeville. This short Statement of Need outlines the role and context and gives a brief overview of the parishes within the benefice.

If you would like a further discussion about the post, please contact the Ven Guy Elsmore (archdeacon.buckingham@oxford.anglican.org or 01865208266).

The context
This is an important stage in the life of the benefice of Ellesborough, The Kimbles and Stoke Mandeville. A number of significant challenges and opportunities have coincided, indicating that this is a Kairos moment which the benefice hopes to explore and embrace. The significant financial difficulties in two of the parishes and the differing missional needs within the benefice and have been discussed in detail, with support from the deanery and diocese. The churches are now in a position to begin working towards a sustainable and mission-focused future.

Following the unanimous decision of all three PCCs to suspend the benefice, the churches now wish to work towards a future which is financially sustainable around two distinct centres of ministry and mission:

- **Ellesborough and The Kimbles**
  The rural context of these villages with a reordered church building at Great Kimble and strong links with the local school. They wish to explore opportunities joining a larger, neighbouring benefice for long-term sustainable oversight and collaborative ministry.

- **Stoke Mandeville**
  This larger community on the edge of Aylesbury will see large new housing development to fill the space between the village and the expanding town of Aylesbury. They wish to explore opportunities joining a larger, neighbouring benefice for long-term sustainable oversight and collaborative ministry.
The role

The Archdeacon of Buckingham is seeking a gifted Interim Minister to lead the parishes over the next 3 years. Working alongside a part-time locally-funded associate priest, to be appointed after the Interim Minister is in post, and a committed LLM, the appointee will:

- lead the three parishes through a process of change in preparation for a sustainable future where each parish to thrive and fulfil its full missional potential. This will include:
  - clarifying and articulating vision within the proposed new two centres of ministry
  - addressing financial concerns and establishing a financially sustainable future for ministry
  - identifying missional opportunities and developing plans to address them
  - establishing administrative support around using all their resources to their full potential
  - exploring the future of All Saints, Little Kimble
- work creatively and strategically and across deanery boundaries with adjacent benefices to explore possible ministry options for the future.
- oversee the locally supported associate priest in providing pastoral care across the benefice
- share the leading of Sunday and Festival worship across the benefice

The role will need a priest who:

- is confident, friendly, compassionate and approachable
- can build teams and motivate people
- is self-aware with a healthy work-life balance

The benefice

Our vision

To be a beacon of hope, living and sharing the love of God.

Our strengths

- Services in a variety of styles
- Parish Neighbourly Team providing practical help and support
- Benefice Pastoral Care Team
- A lay team of four authorised preachers
- Five Church Wardens
- A part time paid administrator
- Links with Great Kimble C of E, Griffin House, and Stoke Mandeville Combined Schools
- Support from the many volunteers who assist in caring for our church buildings
- ‘The Ark’ benefice administration centre
- St Nicholas’ new facilities and their potential use
- Activities hosted by the Ellesborough church
- Hospitality - we love our food – cream teas, fizz parties, curry nights and lunches!
Our challenges

- Recent difficulty meeting diocesan share commitments at The Kimbles and Stoke Mandeville
- Declining congregations in all the churches (30% adults; 50% children since 2009)
- Financial difficulties following the completion of building project at St Nicholas, Great Kimble. Plans have been made to repay outstanding loans over the next five years
- HS2 will run through the benefice, resulting in less direct routes between Stoke Mandeville and other benefice churches

Our opportunities

There are two major opportunities for growth, mission and ministry across the benefice:

- **New housing** is being built around Stoke Mandeville (up to 6,000 people). Aylesbury Deanery has committed to serve and plant into new areas of housing growth and there is a possibility of diocesan investment here in the future

- **School links** are strong with:
  - Great Kimble Church of England school, which worships monthly in the newly reordered church in Great Kimble. There are plans for the school to double in size in future. The incumbent has been at Foundation Governor at the school in the past. Being a Foundation Governor is not a part of the current role.
  - Griffin House independent school
  - Stoke Mandeville Combined Schools

Our long-term hopes

- To develop our distinctive relationships with each of our schools
- To develop our outreach into our local communities, communicate better and increase our visibility
- To involve more children and young families in our worship
- To develop our pastoral care team

Our communities and churches

**Ellesborough**

Ellesborough (pop. 820) is situated within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is very popular with walkers with footpaths leading to the Ridgeway running through the churchyard.

The village has a wide age demographic and small amounts of new development. Transport links are good and the village has many residents who commute to work. The council intends to build some affordable housing, but house prices are generally high. HS2 will have an effect on the parish, having a major impact on the countryside and traffic disruption during construction.

Facilities include a thriving community-owned pub, well-equipped village hall, sports field and a children’s playground, a local brewery, a garage and a filling station. The many local activities, societies and organisations contribute to an active community and a quarterly village magazine helps to draw the community together. There is excellent schools provision in the neighbouring parish of Kimble. Outside the village is a Goat Centre, cafes, various retail outlets and a nursing home, where a service of Holy Communion service is held twice each month.
St Peter & St Paul, Ellesborough

Ellesborough nurtures a love of tradition, cream teas, hospitality and fellowship. The church has an electoral roll of 36, many of whom are actively involved in church life. The church building dates from the 15th century and attracts many walkers each year because of its beautiful location with extensive views. Recent maintenance includes a restored roof, new lighting and sound systems, mains water, a basic servery and extended car park. The church bells were rehung and there is an active team of bell ringers. There are further plans to extend the servery and install interior toilet facilities.

Sympathetic management of the churchyard in collaboration with the Parish Council has resulted in its designation as a Local Wildlife Site.

Great Kimble and Little Kimble

These are small communities with a wonderful array of local societies, organisations and activities. These include a horticultural society, allotment society, Women’s Institute and various sports and craft groups. There are monthly Village Coffee Mornings in the Swan pub and the church produces a newsletter which is distributed voluntarily throughout the parish.

All Saints, Little Kimble

The small but dedicated congregation appreciates the intimacy of weekly BCP Eucharist. This small, atmospheric Grade 1 13th Century church, nestling in farmland, has a Norman font and wonderfully preserved Chertsey tiles and medieval wall paintings. The church is always open for visitors.

St Nicholas, Great Kimble

The congregation enjoys a variety of worship styles and is keen to make use of the newly reordered building as a focus for the school and community. The Grade 1 church dates from the 14th century. The church has recently undergone a major reordering project which is now complete, achieved through considerable local support. The church has a new floor, disabled access toilet, movable pews and chairs, central heating and a servery. The local C of E School plan to use the nave regularly for PE, drama and more.

The church is open for visitors in daylight hours. The laity, organist, small group of musicians and active team of bell-ringers make a significant contribution to services. The churchyard, filled with flowers to encourage biodiversity, has recently been closed.

There are currently 39 people on the electoral roll of both churches. The churches have good links with the local Free Church.

Stoke Mandeville

Stoke Mandeville is a ‘village’ (pop. 2000) on the edge of Aylesbury. The current population will grow significantly in the next few years with the large development of new housing which is already being built. There is good access to schools, transport links and rail services to London and the North.

The village is well known for providing the inspiration for the Paralympic Games, although the hospital site lies outside the parish. There are several small retail outlets, a post office and a selection of pubs in the centre of the village and a business park, horticultural nursery and gym on the outskirts.

The railway station in the village, provides good links to London and a significant proportion of the community commutes to work.
St Mary the Virgin, Stoke Mandeville

Stoke Mandeville places high value on Eucharistic services. Baptisms are popular and there is scope to nurture relationships with these families and the local school. The church building dates from 1866 and is at the centre of the village, within easy walking distance of the Rectory and the Ark. While St Mary’s has a largely elderly congregation, there is plenty of scope for growth and development and the community welcomes the opportunity to build on the current all age provision.

The HS2 rail line will run through the old churchyard with remains being re-interred elsewhere.

The Ark

The Ark, situated close to the Vicarage in Stoke Mandeville, is a shared benefice facility and a venue for benefice nurture groups (Alpha and bible study groups), a term-time Parent and Toddler group, a fortnightly youth group, informal fellowship groups, and the benefice ‘Coffee Stop’ every Thursday morning. The parish office is also in The Ark and is open three mornings a week.

Benefice Worship

Leading worship within the benefice is shared by clergy, a committed LLM and a strong lay leadership team. The proposed appointment of an additional locally-supported priest will add further leadership for worship.

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<tr>
<th>Sundays</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Church</th>
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| 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday | 8am BCP  
9am Parish Communion  
10.45am Parish Communion  
10.45am All Age Worship (lay led)  
10.45am All-age Worship/Songs of Praise (lay led) | Ellesborough  
Stoke Mandeville  
Great Kimber  
Stoke Mandeville  
Ellesborough |
| 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday | 8am Holy Communion (BCP)  
9am Parish Communion  
10.45am Morning worship (lay led)  
10.45am Parish communion | Little Kimber  
Stoke Mandeville  
Great Kimber  
Ellesborough |
| 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday | 8am Holy Communion (BCP)  
9am All-age Holy Communion  
10.45am All-age Holy Communion  
10.45am Sung Matins (BCP, lay led) | Little Kimber  
Stoke Mandeville  
Great Kimber  
Ellesborough |
| 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday | 8am Holy Communion (BCP)  
9am Parish Communion  
10.30am Mustard Seeds Sunday school (lay led)  
10.45am Morning worship (lay led)  
10.45am Parish communion | Little Kimber  
Stoke Mandeville  
Butler’s Cross Hall, Ellesborough  
Great Kimber  
Ellesborough |
| 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday | 9am Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.30am Five United (suspended during vacancy) | Little Kimber  
Butlers Cross Hall, Ellesborough |

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<th>Weekdays</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9am Morning prayer (lay led)</td>
<td>Stoke Mandeville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>9am Holy Communion (1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Wednesdays only)</td>
<td>Stoke Mandeville</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9am Wednesday worship (with Kimble School once a month, lay led)</td>
<td>Great Kimber</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9am Morning prayer (lay led)</td>
<td>Stoke Mandeville</td>
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Our finances

Ellesborough is in a stable financial position and has paid its parish share in full for the past 15 years. The parish is fortunate in having a good level of support from parishioners and others for its successful fundraising activities and we anticipate that this will continue into the future. We hope that through a combination of income from regular donations, church collections and fundraising activities we will be able to continue to meet our unrestricted fund expenditure commitments in full.

The Kimbles faces the financial challenge of maintaining, insuring and heating two listed buildings. The PCC is unable to pay the parish share in the short term and faces significant financial challenges. It is hoped that this situation will improve in the medium/long term following completion of the re-ordering project at St Nicholas church, allowing greater community use of the church facilities and increased attendance.

The parish is well supported by volunteers who provide a variety of services, helping to reduce costs and raise funds. We hold an annual Gift Day.

Stoke Mandeville faces some significant challenges to its financial stability:

- An elderly and declining congregation
- Recent deaths of major donors
- Low levels of unrestricted reserves
- Impending significant expenditure on the fabric of the church

Over the next two to five years there will be significant new housing development in the parish. An enthusiastic outreach scheme may go some way to helping to refinance this parish.

The PCCs have all agreed and committed to paying the parish share allocation for a House for Duty priest for the next 3 years. In order to focus on the defined role, they are budgeting to supplement this ministry with additional, funded ministerial and administrative resources, as necessary.

The Rectory

The Rectory is a large, modern, detached house in a small cul-de-sac adjacent to The Ark. It consists of a spacious living area, a comfortable study separate from the rest of the house, four bedrooms, a double garage and ample parking.

The Rectory is located close to Aylesbury and there are excellent transport links to London. There are good educational opportunities in nearby Aylesbury and area.
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 & pastoral oversight for their Archdeaconries. The Bishop of Buckingham is the Rt Rev’d Alan Wilson who has been the Area Bishop since 2003.

With the appointment of the new Bishop of Oxford, the Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, a new common vision is emerging for the Diocese of Oxford ...

The vision addresses what kind of church we are called to be – A Christ-like Church.

What are the marks of a Christ-like Church? To be the Church of the Beatitudes:

- Contemplative
- Compassionate
- Courageous

It also asks what we are therefore called to do together. This is currently a work in progress, but is likely to cover the following strategic priorities:

- To make a bigger difference in the world and serve the poor
- To share our faith with adults, children and young people and grow the church in every place; rural, urban and suburban
- To plant new churches and congregations everywhere we can
- To serve every school in our community
- To put the discipleship of all at the heart of our common life and set God’s people free
- To celebrate and bless our largest, fastest growing city Milton Keynes

These priorities will be supported centrally by resources, training, conferences, workshops, and much more. The diocese is inviting benefices and their priests to share a vision rather than demanding a response. It wants all its priests to flourish in ministry and to deepen their enjoyment of God.

It is expected that all clergy appointed into the Archdeaconry of Buckingham will want to commit themselves to the Diocesan vision and its strategic direction.

We hope that, having read this Statement of Needs and Traditions, you will want to explore this post further. Conversations with the Archdeacon of Buckingham are welcomed (archdeacon.buckingham@oxford.anglican.org or 01865208266)