

The Parish of Stony Stratford with Calverton
A Middle Way – draft Resolution and Statement of Need

Below is the second full draft of a new Statement of Need, based on that previously used by St Barnabas and St Paul (with St Thomas the Martyr):

The Parish of Stony Stratford with Calverton

“Unity and Flourishing”

A Resolution and Statement of Need for the parish concerning the pastoral and sacramental ministry of priests and bishops

“To maintain the unity of the parish this PCC requests, on grounds of its several theological convictions, that arrangements be made for it in accordance with the Statement of Need set out below and with the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.”

Our Statement of Need about the pastoral and sacramental ministry of priests and bishop

1. Our aspiration:

- a) We desire sacramental unity in our common life and recognize this to be a central Gospel precept, in accordance with Christ’s prayer to the Father before his Passion:
St John 17: 20- 23
- b) We desire to live, grow and flourish as a parish, set within the wider life and structures of the Church of England, in accordance with the Five Guiding Principles set out in the *House of Bishops’ Declaration*.
- c) We are committed to playing a full part in Christ’s mission in the Diocese of Oxford and within the Deanery of Milton Keynes, under the Bishop of Oxford/Buckingham.
- d) We wish to maintain our present fellowship and spirit of common endeavour for the building up of the Body of Christ in the parish and also to contribute to the diversity and inclusiveness of the wider Diocese and the Church of England.
- e) We recognize that our parish, with its distinctive history and Anglo-Catholic worship traditions, set in the town of Stony Stratford, the rural village of Calverton and the Wealds plus Fullers Slade, Galley Hill, Fairfields and Whitehouse areas of the new city of Milton Keynes, is uniquely positioned and called upon to play its part, in the wider Church, in building up a spirit of mutual flourishing of which we can all justly be proud. We seek to explore and develop opportunities for spiritual and communal growth in our parish in closer collaboration with neighbouring churches in the Milton Keynes area.

2. Who we are:

- a) Our overriding wish as a parish is to flourish and maintain unity whilst allowing differing theological views to be held with integrity. We live with and cherish a life of discipleship in which the pastoral and sacramental¹ ministry has been offered by priests and bishops whose ministry can be received by all members of the parish. The parish rejoices in the preaching, teaching and serving ministry of both women and men, though, because it has been a Forward in Faith and The Society of St Wilfred and St Hilda parish for several years, has not received sacramental ministry of women to date or from the wider pool of male Anglo Catholic clergy.
- b) Historically, during the 1990s both the **Parish of All Saints Calverton** and the **Parish of St Mary & St Giles** passed resolutions A & B under the *Ordination of Priests (Women) Measure* and then

¹ **Definitions of the ministries:**

Sacramental ministry: God’s grace in the form of blessing the sacraments such as the Eucharist, baptism, confirmation, reconciliation, marriage, holy orders and anointing the sick

Pastoral ministry: caring for God’s people through leadership, prayer, worship, discipleship, evangelism, fellowship and compassionate presence

Teaching ministry: making and nurturing disciples by observing, guiding and teaching God’s word

petitioned the Bishop of Oxford for extended episcopal care under the terms of the *Act of Synod*. The formation of the new **Parish of Stony Stratford with Calverton** in 2012 from the **Parish of All Saints Calverton** and the **Parish of St Mary & St Giles Stony Stratford** also inherited differing theological views from the earlier merger in 1968 of the two Stony Stratford Parishes of **St Giles** and **St Mary the Virgin**. In 2015 the CofE's decision to consecrate women to the episcopate superseded the earlier resolutions. The PCC passed a new Resolution under the provisions of the *House of Bishops Declaration*. When the most recent incumbent retired in 2022, the PCC commissioned a questionnaire to discover the views of both congregations, which revealed a large majority wishing to rescind the existing resolution and accept women priests, and approximately 17% wishing to retain the existing resolution, while the PCC views were 50:50.

- c) Although the parish has been a member of Forward in Faith and The Society for some time, many of the 2022 Parish Questionnaire comments indicate a strong desire to leave these organisations and work with our differences in recognition that pushing one particular view or position of conscience in this matter would cause offence to others who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. This revised resolution and Statement of Need which entails leaving Forward in Faith and The Society will enable our parish to retain parish unity and appoint a new rector from a wider pool of male Anglo-Catholic priests. We are a parish in which all strive to live together in bonds of love, honesty, mutual understanding and respect including acknowledgment of differing views or positions of conscience.
- d) Our congregation includes amongst its number:
- i. Those who hold the conviction that the Incarnation is about all humanity, and therefore the ordination of women to the priesthood and consecration to the episcopate fulfils and completes these ministries.
 - ii. Those who believe the calling of the twelve apostles, who were alone with Jesus at the Institution of the Eucharist, is integral to the Church's tradition of reserving priestly and episcopal ministry to men alone; since the time of the apostles the Church has retained this pattern, as established by our Lord.
 - iii. Those who consider that a change to the nature of the threefold ministry to admit women as priests and bishops could be received but only if this was with the authority of the whole Church, both East and West.
 - iv. Those who view the current situation in our parish as narrowing or restricting of our life together so wish to leave Forward and Faith and The Society, then appoint a male priest to accommodate those who are not able to accept the sacraments from a woman priest.
 - v. Those who regard the custom of reserving priestly and episcopal ministry to men alone as too early and too holy a tradition to be changed now.
 - vi. Those for whom this is not a matter of great moment, and whose paramount concern is the unity of the parish.
- e) Within this diverse spectrum of convictions, in order to promote unity and flourishing of spiritual growth, it is necessary for all to be able to receive the same sacraments in the same parish churches from the same minister.

3. Our need:

We ask the Bishop of Oxford to provide pastoral and sacramental ministry for us, which can be received by all members of the parish from bishops and priests, thus expressing and supporting our need and identity as described above.

In short this *might* include:

The Bishop of the Diocese as Ordinary delegating *pastoral, teaching* and *sacramental* ministry in the two churches to an appropriate Bishop, *albeit*:

- a) The two churches being clear in their desire to appoint a new incumbent who will permit and enable the *pastoral* and *teaching* ministry of colleagues lay and ordained, both locally and from within the Diocesan Senior Staff team, *irrespective of their gender*.

- b) Any new incumbent would be expected to play a full part in working collaboratively with colleagues across the deanery as well as with colleagues lay and ordained in other Declaration Parishes, who would welcome such opportunities.
- c) The Bishop of Oxford (or his representatives) being seen to work collegially with the bishop to whom sacramental ministry is delegated, during the recruitment process, as a visible sign of our unity in diversity
- d) All and any provisions made by the Diocesan Bishop are made recognising the ongoing and urgent need for a re-invigorated season of evangelisation within the parish, which will be best served by promoting unity within the Body of Christ in this place.

4. Conclusion:

We hope and pray that we will be allowed to proceed together and flourish as a parish – the etymology of the word parish, is the New Testament Greek παροικία (paroikia), meaning ‘a sojourning in a foreign land’. In this our exile we are bound to uphold one another: acknowledging our fallen nature, the most important thing we do together is to ask God’s mercy and, kneeling upon our knees, receive our viaticum, our heavenly food for the journey. We need to continue to do this together as a congregation, ‘and with joy we’ll persevere.’

[This Statement of Need would ideally also include a statement from the Bishops of Oxford, Buckingham and Oswestry plus possibly a statement from the Milton Keynes Deanery.]