Watling Valley Ecumenical Partnership

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Name	**Watling Valley Ecumenical Partnership (WVEP)**
Charity Number	**1199024**
Address	**c/o The Partnership Office** **33 Dulverton Drive, Furzton, Milton Keynes MK4 1NA**
Telephone	**01908 504452**
Website	**www.watlingvalley.org.uk**
Elected Trustees	**Lynne Smith, Chair** **Rozi Rowcroft James, Clerk** **Terrence Dawes** **Val Hicks** **David Thom** **Anne Jones**
Nominated Trustees	**Gayle Shotton** **Taiwo Omo-Ikerodah**
Until April 27th 2025	**Tomi Fagbuyi**
From 2nd October 2025	**Regina Osborne**
From 2nd October 2025	**Kenya Williams**
Ex-Officio Trustees	**Rev Mike Morris** **Rev Kath Long** **Rev Adedayo Adebiyi**
Until July 31st 2025	**Rev Barry Lotz**
Administrator	**Liz Morris**
Principal Bankers	**Lloyds Bank, Barclays Bank, CAF Bank and Central Board of Finance of the Church of England**
Independent Examiner	**Ben Afonja B.Sc, ACMA** **1 Home Field, Caldecotte** **Milton Keynes MK7 8HH**

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2025
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES OF WATLING VALLEY ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

Objectives and Activities

Watling Valley Ecumenical Partnership (WVEP) is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which is registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales. The primary objective is to advance the Christian faith in accordance with the principles and practices of the participating denominations in the area of benefit.

The Trustees have the responsibility of promoting in the partnership, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has the responsibility for maintaining the church buildings. Shortly before his death, Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one as he and God were one. We take that prayer and call very seriously, and our vision is that we should be 'a united body of Christians, living with love, giving in grace and moving for mission'.

Achievements and Performance

Church attendance

There were 219 church members, with average weekly attendance counted during October as 137 adults plus 34 children. Rising to 890 for Christmas Eve daytime, 127 for Christmas Eve midnight and 224 for Christmas Day Services

From the registers

YEAR	Baptisms	Thanksgivings	Confirmations	Weddings	Blessings	Funerals	Interments
2025	17	0	23	4	0	12	6
2024	16	0		5	0	24	8
2023	19	0		6	1	23	13

Structure, Governance and Management

Ministers of the Watling Valley are ex-officio trustees. The Parochial Church Council nominates a minimum of three, and a maximum of five, trustees. The church members elect a minimum of six and a maximum of eight trustees. All trustees must be members of the Watling Valley Ecumenical Partnership.

The Trustee Board met six times during the year, with an average attendance of 12.

One Trustee resigned due to work commitments. The PCC met and nominated two members to the Trustee Board.

The accounting package we had been using, Quickbooks, was causing reporting issues and so Trustees held an emergency meeting and agreed to go back to Excel spreadsheets across the

Partnership which had previously been used. This was welcomed by our local Church Treasurers. Trustees also agreed to look at other accounting packages that could be used from January 2026. Having made some enquiries Trustees found a company who used Xero and were willing to work with us to transfer all accounts to this system. Trustees agreed to run the Excel spreadsheet alongside Xero from January 2026 with the new company, CS Balanced Books, producing our accounts moving forward. They also took on payroll. One of our new Trustees, Regina Osborne took on the role of Finance Trustee and will work alongside CS Balanced Books and report back to Trustees.

A small group of members, led by Rev Kath Long, registered the Partnership via the Eco Church Scheme. They meet regularly and Eco Church is a regular agenda item for Trustees.

Safeguarding – Vivian (our Parish Safeguarding Officer) has continued to work closely with our local Safeguarding coordinators to ensure all relevant DBS checks are made and all training is up to date. There were challenges with DBS checks during the latter part of 2025 as our provider ACPS discovered their system had been hacked and some personal details taken. 5 members of our Partnership were notified their records had been part of the hack and were given a year's free subscription to Experian and given advice on how to protect their data and what to do if there was a problem. The Oxford Diocese recommended that all DBS applications were put on hold for a while but, if essential, Thirtyone:Eight could be used. They were looking for a permanent solution to this and would update us in 2026 as to what provider should be used for future checks. We continue to use the Safeguarding Dashboard and Safeguarding Hub to help us with our Safeguarding and it continues to be a standard item on all business agendas within the life of the Partnership.

Concerns raised during the year were dealt with appropriately with support from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and all necessary records kept.

Mission and Ministry – 'living with love, giving in grace and moving for mission'.

We have continued with our regular service pattern and enjoyed coming together for regular Partnership Services when there are 5 Sundays in the month and also specific festivals. We continue to offer weekly Night Prayer, led by an increasing number of members from across the Partnership as well as visiting ministers, each bringing their own style and often includes our younger members. We have a weekly mailing that goes out to all our members that includes a reflection on the readings for that week from one of the ministers.

This year we held the Milton Keynes wide Ecumenical Confirmation Service at Servant King. We also ran the Confirmation Preparation Course over a 6 week period, with around 24 people attending. On the day there were 7 baptisms (5 total immersion) and 26 adults and young people, 23 from our Partnership, were confirmed. It was a privilege to host such a wonderful, uplifting service.

The small groups across the Partnership have continued to flourish. One Voice sing regularly at our Partnership services and also other occasions (Barry's Farewell, the Confirmation Service and the Mayor of Milton Keynes Civic Service). They also attend other events in Oxford and beyond. Other groups include Knit and Natter, Café Connect, People at the Pub, and Open Church at St Mary's which all offer a time for people to come together for support and fellowship whether they are part of the church family or not.

This year also saw a new group begin – Soul Sisters. Launched in October this is a new group for women across the Partnership, hence the name Soul Sisters. The group has a different activity each month. Some are crafts, which has included embroidery and sewing small prayer quilts, some activities are more faith based, including a meditative prayer session, and we socialise as a group, including meals out. The heart of the group is creating a mutually supportive group of women in faith and women over the age of 18 are invited from across the Partnership.

Work with children and young people across the Partnership has continued with weekly assemblies at Christ the Sower and Caroline Haslett along with regular assemblies at a number of other schools alongside support in delivering the RE curriculum. There are very close links with the Pre-school who operate at Servant King and they also request regular visits and help us with window displays at various times of the year. Our Hot Potatoes Youth Group continues to thrive offering a safe place for young people in school yrs7 and up. Some discussions are held about various topics and although they were unable to hold a charity event in 2025, they are planning something for 2026. Friendships are formed within the group and they support one another.

Once again we ran a very successful Holiday Club from Christ the Sower school, Wonder Zone a scienced themed week, and welcomed around 40 children made up of about half who have been before and half for whom it was their first time. We were pleased to once again offer some free places for those in need and we worked with Christ the Sower School to make sure that these went to the right families. Great fun was had by all and planning for next year's has begun.

Café Connect continues to thrive. There is always cake available and all birthdays are celebrated. They are keen to play bingo, have a quiz and get involved in some of the Church events. One of our Ministers usually attends and are very much welcomed by all attending.

Various Fund-Raising events have taken place during 2025. Summer Bar-B-Q and Car Boot Sale, Christmas Craft Fayre, Christmas Tree Festival, Quiz Nights, Come and Sing evenings and much more. These events are well supported by the local communities and a chance for members to support each other.

Holy Cross continue to offer a Food Pantry once a month supporting local people in the current financial climate. The demand continues to grow for this support, and we are very grateful to the Parish Council and others who are generously supporting this important work.

One of our churches in the Partnership (Holy Cross) has continued to offer a Warm Space, supported by the local Parish Council, and has also continued to host UnityMK (formerly known as the Winter Night Shelter) throughout the winter months.

The churches continue to work hard at being there for the wider community offering a space for people to meet together whether that's for instrument lessons and to sing, or for uniformed organisations, U3A, baby sensory and others. Not only does this help to bring in some much-needed income, it also is another way for us to serve our communities.

At the end of 2024 it was agreed that we register to become an Eco Church. A small group was formed during 2025 to move this forward and become the core Eco Church team:
Kath Long, Karen Jones, Samantha Seaton, Amber Walsh-Brightman and Lydia Figg

ARocha are the people who run the Eco Church award and in order for us to receive any of the awards – Bronze, Silver or Gold – we are required to fill in a questionnaire. This questionnaire is broken down into the following sections:

- Worship and Teaching
- Buildings and Energy
- Land and Nature
- Community and Global Engagement
- Lifestyle

As a core team, we are working on what information is needed to complete these questionnaires. We have been meeting monthly since July 2025 to begin this process. So do keep an eye out for any of us asking questions to help us complete this task.

Recently we have spent time writing a strategy for worship and teaching in the partnership bearing in mind the Eco Church themes. Subject to ministerial approval of this, we will have completed the worship section of the questionnaire.

Other sections will require support from Church Wardens, Flower arrangers and other groups of people across the Partnership.

Currently we are sharing an Eco Church Corner in Watling Valley Weekly. This is a semi regular feature so do keep your eyes peeled for this as this will help us work towards the Lifestyle section of the questionnaire.

We are aiming to have achieved bronze award for each church by the end of 2026.

During 2025 we ran various Discipleship courses. Sunshine and Showers (focussing on the Bible) and an Advent Course (Gifted – Reflecting on Advent). Our plan is to offer one short course each term during 2026 as well as our Confirmation Course and Baptism Preparation.

We are very grateful to all those who support the worshiping life of the Partnership – those who clean our churches, set up chairs, lead intercessions, serve at communion, provide refreshments, lead worship, play music, sing and all volunteers who help in so many other ways. We continue to offer a wide range of worship from the traditional Book of Common Pryer to the more informal Café Style. We regularly find visitors coming along to our services and we always try to make they have a warm welcome. Christmas continues to see our biggest influx of visitors for worship, especially at our afternoon services on Christmas Eve. Christmas gives us a great opportunity to engage with the community and to share the real meaning of Christmas.

The worshiping life of the church extends beyond our church buildings into the sheltered housing and residential and nursing homes that we regularly visit. This year we added Elizabeth Gardens to the list of places where we lead worship at least once a month.

We continue to work closely we each other denominations and, as best we can, engaging with and helping to shape their vision for Milton Keynes.

The ministers have continued with their own learning and has included Barry his sabbatical in preparation for ‘Stepping Down’.

This year we said goodbye to Barry Lotz as he retired at the end of July. We held a very emotional Partnership Service to express our thanks to Barry and Celeste and wish them well in retirement. We also prepared for Deacon Ian Murray and his family joining us in March 2026. There was a lot of work that needed to be arranged to update the Manse between Barry leaving and Ian moving in. Discussions with the Methodist Circuit were held and Watling Valley were

heavily involved in drawing up plans, overseeing the work and holding regular inspections of the property. We very much look forward to Ian joining us with the experience and knowledge he will bring to the Partnership.

Watling Valley continues to be a very busy and active Partnership and it is a real team effort, of all the church family, to enable us to continue to do all that we do. We look forward to the joys and challenges that God has instore for us in 2026.

Financial Review

Planned Giving through the Parish Giving Scheme and Standing Orders increased slightly across the Partnership. We were also extremely grateful for the generous Ad Hoc donations we received. Fees for Weddings and Funerals continue to be lower than pre-Covid levels. This is now expected as couples are able to hold their weddings in various other buildings/hotels that can also accommodate the reception.

Fund raising has been quite a focus during the year with the usual Summer Fetes, Christmas Fetes and the Bucks Historic Ride and Stride. There was an increase in the number of Christmas Events this year and also many more musica events/concerts helping to increase fund raising across the Partnership.

During 2025 all expenditure was scrutinised. Our Office Administrator ensured supplies were obtained at the most competitive prices, obtaining discount where possible. Our children's Holiday Club was a repeat of one we had used several years ago and so most of the resources were readily available.

The WVEP Share was £174,390. This provides for the running expenses of both the Partnership and Partnership Office, the stipends and housing for our Ministers, contributions to the running costs of all four denominations and Churches Together in Milton Keynes.

Reserves Policy

It is good practice to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds (if possible), which equates to approximately six months unrestricted payments, about £134,000 to cover emergency situations that may arise from time to time.

Lynne Smith, Chair of Trustees

Mike Morris, Team Leader

	ASL	HCT	SGT	SKF	SMS	WV	TOTAL	WVEP
Income								
Income from churches								158,124.00
Planned Giving - Gift Aid	31,530.89	12,031.88	12,161.17	14,363.21	30,630.11		100,717.26	
Planned Giving - Not Gift Aid	-		961.32	4,867.24	1,140.00		6,968.56	
Collections - Gift Aid	-	859.46	1,894.74	1,074.06	5,304.70		9,132.96	
Collections - Not Gift Aid	100.00			178.00	929.99		1,207.99	
Collections - GASDS	3,743.07			43.00		1,604.07	5,390.14	1,604.07
Income Tax Recovered	7,752.95	2,529.14	2,199.35	817.10	7,078.22		20,376.76	
Graveyard Reservations	3,000.00			-			3,000.00	
Grants (RWT)	-			-			-	
General Grants						12,300.00	12,300.00	12,300.00
Hugh Parke Trust	1,500.00			-			1,500.00	
Wedding & Funeral Fees	1,257.00			-	1,320.00		2,577.00	
Hire Income - regular	1,030.00	6,010.50		39,731.77	660.00		47,432.27	
Hire Income - ad hoc	-	-		5,241.00			5,241.00	
Fund Raising Events	2,743.42			2,453.94	5,323.63	181.29	10,702.28	181.29
Ride and Stride	435.63						435.63	
Interest Received	400.99		7,571.73		433.55	212.41	8,618.68	212.41
Donations Gift Aided	2,105.03	2,160.00	580.00	21,766.65	4,951.17	550.00	32,112.85	550.00
Donations Not Gift Aided	30.00	694.92	1,269.01		1,274.00		3,267.93	
Flower Income	215.00						215.00	
Other Income	-		10.00			225.8	235.80	225.80
Food Pantry Income		6,723.13					6,723.13	
Café Connect income				569.15			569.15	
	55,843.98	**31,009.03**	**26,647.32**	**91,105.12**	**59,045.37**	**15,073.57**	**278,724.39**	**173,197.57**

Expenditure

Denominational Costs								160,430.15
Churches Share to WVEP	36,000.00	28,260.00	22,464.00	30,000.00	41,400.00		158,124.00	
Worship Wine/candles	116.76		148.96	270.00	42.63	717.83	1,296.18	717.83
Printing	-					1,675.77	1,675.77	1,675.77
Flowers	277.47						277.47	
Licences	207.00	100.00	100.00			544.70	951.70	544.70
Catering Supplies						215.13	215.13	215.13
Mainten Major repairs	315.00			750.00	1,034.40		2,099.40	
Minor repairs	890.61	230.00	426.00	11,420.97	1,342.37		14,309.95	
Contracts / servicing	901.86	1,099.16	70.13	4,420.06	439.50	608.92	7,539.63	608.92
Premise Gas	7,394.79	3,372.39		5,601.37	2,795.97		19,164.52	
Electricity	645.70	1,574.97	211.04	2,083.26	988.41		5,503.38	
Water	270.90	175.28		138.00	234.08		818.26	
Telephone / WiFi	678.02	455.65		1,168.41		446.66	2,748.74	446.66
Musician Fees, Equipment,	-			23,424.00	4,192.00	242.57	27,858.57	242.57
Other Expenses	55.00			2,101.03		334.54	2,490.57	455.69
Bank Charges						37.36	37.36	37.36
Legal and Professional fees						1,007.00	1,007.00	1,007.00
Postage					53.49	187.60	241.09	187.60
Youth Work							-	
Staff salaries						12,367.84	12,367.84	12,367.84
Tax							-	
Pension Costs						960.96	960.96	960.96
Ministerial Expenses						4,654.22	4,654.22	4,654.22
Christ the Sower						480.00	480.00	480.00
Insurance	2,454.05	1,379.20	1,047.48	2,646.98	4,052.33	460.72	12,040.76	460.72
Contract cleaning				7,483.00			7,483.00	
Cleaning equipment	64.24	1,720.00		1,923.45			3,707.69	
Cost of e-giving	31.36	11.75	16.51		86.29		145.91	
Cost of fundraising	11.49		49.99	140.00			201.48	
Food pantry shopping		8,082.08					8,082.08	
Christian Giving					360.00		360.00	
	50,314.25	**46,460.48**	**24,534.11**	**93,570.53**	**57,021.47**	**24,941.82**	**296,842.66**	**185,493.12**
Surplus / Deficit	5,529.73	(15,451.45)	2,113.21	(2,465.41)	2,023.90	(9,868.25)	(18,118.27)	(12,295.55)

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2025

	ASL	HCT	SGT	SKF	SMS	WV	TOTAL
Fixed Assets	0	-					
Current Assets							
Debtors	3,671.94	-	-	817.20	-	12,000.25	16,489.39
Current Accounts	13,412.36	22,866.20	8,235.48	21,469.91	14,250.37	5,309.31	85,543.63
Interest Bearing Accounts	27,574.12		174,881.91		36,191.66	12,453.72	251,101.41
Current Liabilities							
Creditors	(144.66)	(20.00)	(56.00)	(1,115.00)		(600.68)	(1,936.34)
Total Assets	**44,513.76**	**22,846.20**	**183,061.39**	**21,172.11**	**50,442.03**	**29,162.60**	**351,198.09**
Restricted Funds - Organ Reserve		-					
- Organ Reserve	112.48		685.00		455.92		1,253.40
- Bells Reserve	1,304.25	-			10,058.43		11,362.68
- Special Reserve	500.00	-					500.00
- Community and Outreach			804.70	1,882.17		1,520.00	4,206.87
- Bob Winstanley Fund			153,152.50				153,152.50
- Hetty Watts			3,025.00				3,025.00
- Building Fund			14,058.73		4,903.00		18,961.73
- Music fund					1,109.13		1,109.13
- Churchyard fund					4,146.50		4,146.50
- Tattenhoe Community						313.00	313.00
- Equipment Fund						140.00	140.00
- Ministers' Discretionary Fund						100.00	100.00
- Ministry Fund						10,031.00	10,031.00
- Voices						245.00	245.00
- Youth Ministry						8,749.92	8,749.92
- Holiday Club						1,935.77	1,935.77
							-
St Mary's Charity					23,023.07		23,023.07
Reserves Brought Down	[37,067.3]	[38,447.65]	[8,800.17]	[21,755.35]	[4,722.08]	[18,423.46]	[129216.01]
Reserves Current Year	[5,529.73]	[-15,451.45]	[2535.29]	[-2,465.41]	[2023.90]	[-12295.55]	[-13781.65]
Reserves Carried Forward	42,597.03	22,846.20	11,335.46	19,289.94	6,745.98	6,127.91	108,942.52
Total Liabilities	**44,513.76**	**22,846.20**	**183,061.39**	**21,172.11**	**50,442.03**	**29,162.60**	**351,198.09**
Difference	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees	**WATLING VALLEY ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP**		
On accounts for the year ended	31ST DECEMBER 2025	**Charity no (if any)**	1199024
Set out on pages			

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 /12 /2025.**

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

[The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:	O A AFONJA	**Date:**	11th May 2026
Name:	MR OLUGBENGA AFONJA		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANTS		
Address:	1 HOME FIELD, CALDECOTTE		
	MILTON KEYNES		
	MK7 8HH		

Section B	Disclosure
	Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).
Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.	it was noted that there were some discrepancies between the bank balances and the Reserves Brought Down across a few parishes. This will require restating prior year balances to align opening & closing cash positions and debtor balances.