



# The Ecumenical Partnership of West Swindon and the Lydiards



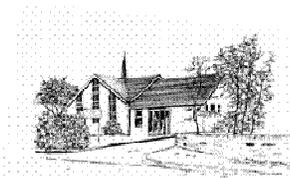
All Saints Lydiard Millicent



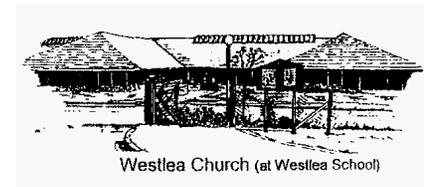
St. Mary's Lydiard Tregoze



Holy Trinity Shaw



Toothill Church



Westlea Church (at Westlea School)

**Annual Report of the Partnership  
for the year ending 31 December 2008**

The Partnership of West Swindon and the Lydiards

Baptist • Church of England • Methodist • United Reformed Church

## Values

We want to affirm a number of distinctive values, which we hold as being of particular importance for our Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP):

- We accept the Lordship of the risen Jesus Christ – alive still today.
- We are Bible-based – accepting Scripture’s inspiration and authority.
- We are evangelical – in doctrine and its application to contemporary life.
- We believe that Jesus Christ is the ground of our salvation and model of our mission, inspiring us in service to a materially and spiritually needy world.
- We depend upon the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit – to renew us and impart charismatic gifts for healing, deliverance and other ministries.
- We are committed to a collaborative style of ministry – with all God’s People.

## Covenant

We specifically commit ourselves:

- To seek prayerfully to understand more clearly the Vision of God and His calling to grow His kingdom here.
- To discover more from the Scriptures about the theological basis for our unity-in-mission, and its practical consequences.
- To conform ourselves to the values of Jesus, as enshrined in his teaching on discipleship and our ‘Declaration of Intent’.
- To share together in missionary outreach to the people that God leads us into contact with through our daily lives.
- To serve all the people of West Swindon & the Lydiards with the same unconditional covenantal love that God has for them.

## Mission Statement

We affirm, together with Churches Together in England that our understanding of the practical outworking of our shared Mission is:

- To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom;
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
- To respond to human need by loving service;
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society; and
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

## A Prayer for our Partnership

### Partnership Prayer

Creator God, we praise you for all that you have given to us. We thank you for those who have worked to complete our constitution in a way that is acceptable to all the denominations. We thank you for our diversity and for the richness that brings to our life together in this ecumenical setting. We pray that the creativity that you have given us will spill over into imaginative action in our communities.

Living Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are the Good Shepherd, who feeds us and guides us; that you know the plans you have for us as a Partnership, as local Churches and as individuals. As we struggle sometimes with our differences, help us to continue to pursue sacrificial commitment to you and to one another, knowing that your purposes are for good and not for evil.

Holy Spirit, we ask for your peace, your presence and your power to flow through us, that we may be channels of living water. Refresh and renew those who are tired and weary and enable your life-giving love to flow to those we come into contact with day by day.

Anne Carter

## Organisation and Trustees

The Partnership comprises five churches:

**All Saints Church, Lydiard Millicent**  
**Holy Trinity Church, Shaw**  
**St Mary's Church, Lydiard Tregoze**  
**Toothill Church**  
**Westlea Church**

The Partnership is recognised by the Baptist Union, Church of England, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church, and serves over 30,000 people living in West Swindon, The Lydiards and associated rural areas. It looks to the Swindon Churches Together as its Sponsoring Body for guidance and oversight.

**Our Bank Account** is with CafCash P.O. Box 289, West Malling, Kent ME19 4TA

**Our Auditor** is Robert Brailsford, Monahan's, 38 – 42 Newport Street, Swindon SN1 3DR.

The Ecumenical Staff Team of Ministers comprises those who have been duly authorised and appointed by the four participating denominations (Article 5 of the Constitution).

Team Rector (Church of England)	<b>Revd Stephen Skinner</b>
Team Vicar (Church of England)	<b>Revd Tudor Roberts</b>
Honorary Curate (Church of England, part time)	<b>Revd Jane Skinner</b>
Honorary Curate (Church of England, part time)	<b>Revd Patricia Roberts</b>
United Reformed Church Minister (self-supporting, part time)	<b>Revd Dick Gray</b>
Baptist Minister	<b>Revd Anne Carter</b>

### Committee Structure

The trustees are the members of the Ecumenical Church Council (ECC) (Article 8 of the Constitution). Anglican Members also constitute the Parochial Church Council (PCC) when needed to conduct Anglican specific business. The members of the ECC are the Partnership's Trustees for Charity Commission purposes.

The Ecumenical Staff Team	<b>As above</b>	
ECC Chair	<b>Chris Scarisbrick</b>	
ECC Vice Chair	<b>Revd Stephen Skinner</b>	
Churchwardens	<b>John Ridsdale Lesley Franklin (A) Debbie Fleet</b>	
Senior Steward	<b>Mark Dowling</b>	
Treasurer	<b>Revd Dick Gray</b>	
Secretary	<b>Ed Poole (resigned in 2008) Jane Skinner (A)</b>	
Elected Members	<b>David Ratnam John Halstead Mark Dowling Rachel Dowling Pat Watson Lesley Franklin</b>	<b>Peter Gilder Julie Scarisbrick Chris Scarisbrick Eileen Sawyer Jane Skinner Angela Mak</b>
Co-opted members	<b>Mary Poole</b>	
Deanery Synod Representatives	<b>Sarah Wilmot, Steve Pearce, Mary Poole</b>	

(A) Appointed during year (R) Resigned during year

We are recognised by Churches Together in England as a Single Congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership. The ECC is the main governance and representative body. Its main responsibilities are broadly grouped as Regulatory, Oversight and Governance. Other responsibilities are devolved to the Local Church Committees (LCC) / Leadership Teams - in the areas of Partnership, Ministry / Mission, Pastoral care and Leadership. A fuller description of the current functions of the ECC, PCC and LCC's can be found in the current Partnership Constitution (1988) and in draft Standing Orders for the revised Constitution (2006).

The ECC met 5 times in 2008 [Jan, Mar, May, July, October] in addition to the Annual General Meeting on 12 March. Main ECC topics during the year were:

Main topics discussed were:

- 2008 Partnership Goals
- Income and expenditure; property refurbishments; review of budget planning process
- Youth activity reports; strategic proposal from Ncounter

The ECC Standing Committee met 7 times in 2008, at intervals between ECC meetings – to plan agendas and follow up on ECC decisions.

Appointed Sub Groups handled specialist areas of work on behalf of the ECC, and gave reports on progress. They included for 2008:

We shall also look at ways to encourage all our members to read their bibles and to see that the bible can speak to each of us today, for unbelievably it is really a living document.

## Youth Work

### REMIX

REMIX will continue to operate on Tuesday nights but as always more helpers are really needed.

### Schools Out Club

We hope to continue this in 2009 although numbers are still quite small, it does provide a valuable resource for some young people.

### Schools Lunch clubs

With support from Ncounter we help with lunch clubs at Greendown and Braydon Forest.

### Emerge Community Festival at Shaw

On the afternoon and evening of May 16<sup>th</sup> our young people are to hold, with the full involvement of adults, a major community festival. This will use Holy trinity Shaw as its basic venue, but hopefully spread out into the grassy area behind the church and shopping mall area too! The aim is for fun activities with music, dance, drama, puppets, food, & games. The afternoon more geared towards younger people and families with the evening more towards secondary age youth, with a concert by "Collective".

## And finally...

We believe this Report gives a clear picture of the life of the Ecumenical Partnership of West Swindon and the Lydiards, and the ways in which members of the ECC have sought to fulfil the responsibility placed on them as Trustees. This report should also be read in conjunction with:

- The Consolidated accounts of the Partnership
- The Annual Accounts of the ECC
- The Annual Reports & Accounts from each of our Local Churches

This composite Report and associated Accounts are prepared under the guidance of Charities Commission requirements and SORP 2005 recommended practice guidance.

This report will be posted at or below <http://WSwinLyd.org.uk/council/report/>  
Partnership Website: <http://WSwinLyd.org.uk>

## Our Goals for 2009

I want to be part of a church community that cares about God, of course; cares about his chosen people in the churches, sure; and just as importantly cares about the community of people that God loves, but we don't know very well. We have a responsibility to preach the good news. It's important. However we have no right to expect people to listen unless we live out all the parts of the Gospel, and to our communities that is most visible when we are "out there" governing schools, offering practical help to those in need, organising anything that our community needs, is right and needs doing. Church committees and leadership teams, its your job to find the "widows and orphans" and to find ways for us all to "wait on tables". (Acts 6 vv1-3)

So I am pleased to see even more focus to be given to our outward directed activities. Our proposed goals for 2009 are

- Equip and Encourage
- Prayer and Spirituality
- Youth Work

### Equip and Encourage

Support, develop and affirm church members in their contribution to church and community life

- Developing a culture where we express our appreciation for the gifts we see in others – through a simple word of thanks, or sometimes a card or note
- Considering ways that some might offer 'support services' in order to release others in different ministries – eg agreeing to keep an eye on the children of those involved in prayer ministry
- Continuing to train and equip children and youth workers, perhaps this year by taking some away to a training course where they can benefit from interaction with others in similar situations as well at the overall teaching given
- To begin to develop courses and trainers to run community linked courses which could include: money management; parenting; stress management etc.

### Prayer & Spirituality

We shall certainly continue with the Prayer group that already meets together, and we shall seek other ways for corporate prayer together, perhaps including a real challenge of a 24 hour prayer vigil.

- Constitution Group (completed) – group meetings and development work
- Youth Leaders Group
- Emerge Consultative / Working Group

We note with sadness the passing of Bill Paget a long time member and active member of the leadership of the Partnership over many years.

### Risks

The Partnership has a number of risks to its activities which have been assessed at either ECC or Standing Committee levels. These include:

- ◆ Risk of financial commitment, particularly with 3 full time clergy. Reserves cover approx 1 year's stipend and expenses.
- ◆ Organisational risks due to limited deployment of Staff for a large part of the year, Limited resources available for work delegated to the Officers and ECC Standing Committee.
- ◆ Organisational and accountability risks relating to the Partnership's Policies and Procedures, and extended work to revise the Constitution
- ◆ Structural risks due to the Partnership's Ecumenical nature, and membership trends in some churches

The ECC considers that these risks have been mitigated to the best practicable extent. They are monitored within the Partnership's governance processes.

### Induction and Training of Trustees

There is at present no formal process for training of new or existing Trustees. However ECC members are aware of their role and responsibilities, through discussion and briefing before and at meetings. Further attention will be given based on the provisions of the new Constitution when completed and adopted. Arrangements will also be made in relation to the requirements for the Partnership's Charity Commission registration by October 2008.

## Review of 2008 Goals/Tasks

### Prayer & Spirituality

This Goal was a continuation of that from 2007. The Questionnaire led by Janet Gray in 2007 revealed that there was no support for a regular Partnership Prayer Meeting – it being better to publicise and encourage support for the individual church's Prayer Meetings; most of which occur

monthly. However, following the very successful 2008 Partnership Lent Course called "Soul Spark" (attended by at least 20 people most weeks) we agreed to commence a monthly "Reflective Prayer" meeting. At least six of these have been held over the year, led by a variety of people at the Rectory. They have been very imaginative sessions, using music, artwork, poetry and craftwork! Roughly 4 – 6 have attended each time.

For several years St. Marys have run a very successful Summer Course at their Stable Room. This took place whilst normal home groups had their Summer Recess. This year the invitation was extended to all churches, and around 10-15 attended the 6 sessions. We held a Course at Toothill Church during August on the theme of "Hope", using an excellent DVD course produced by Spring Harvest. We hope to repeat the success in Summer 2009.

Also in response to requests the first ever Partnership Day Retreat was held in November. It was led by Methodist Superintendent Derek Collins, at Aldbourne Methodist Chapel. We learned a lot about developing a more reflective life of prayer. Around 15 attended. There is clearly enthusiasm for this Retreat to be repeated, perhaps on an annual basis.

Stephen Skinner

## Equip and Encourage

Support, develop and affirm church members in their contribution to church and community life

We have made a slow but positive start on this goal which will be continued into 2009.

- **John Hardwick Weekend** for our children's workers and to encourage our children too with something special. This gave people ideas they have been able to build on.
- **Freedom in Christ course** – This has been found to be very popular and a way for people to grow in confidence in their Christian faith. It's a 13 part Discipleship course similar in format to Alpha, All Saints ran one course in the Summer term of 2008, and are presently at the time of writing in the middle of a second course.
- Five people were able to attend **the Willow Creek Leadership Summit** in October, based in Bristol. We have returned with materials we hope to be able to share together.
- **A lent course entitled 'Soul Spark'** which also linked with our prayer goal and a Summer Course on Hope.

There are four primary strategic strands. Each strand aims to create more locally generated ownership and action in the overall work of the Diocese:

### 1: Growth Programme.

It is a holistic programme, which expects each parish to produce and then enact a locally generated Growth Plan. Each parish / church is asked to produce such a Growth Plan and forward it to the Deanery for comment. To assist in this a team of consultants are offered through the Mission & Ministry Development Team.

### 2: Leadership Development.

The aim is to release the energy of ordained and lay leaders of the churches to empower the whole people of God. Local leadership team development in vacancies will be a targeted tool to do this. During our imminent vacancy specialist advisers will work with our Partnership to identify and develop local leadership.

### 3: Structures of oversight and support.

A new feature of this will be increasing deanery responsibility for delivering diocesan decision-making. Deanery Leadership Teams will develop Deanery Strategies, and make decisions upon the deployment of (increasingly scarce) diocesan stipendiary posts. They will ensure best possible collection rates for Parish Share (what we often call 'Diocesan Quota').

### 4: Income Generation.

Local churches will need to have a greater proportion of their financial income at their disposal. Thus a smaller proportion of parish income will go to meet the overall costs of the diocese. To achieve this more money will be generated from non-parochial sources, and more voluntary leadership will be trained and released in ministry and service.

We can expect this Strategy to significantly impact our partnership from the outset of the Anglican Pastoral Vacancy – so let's get prepared!! A second Growth Workshop Day was held in Swindon in January 2009 to assist this development programme: about 12 of our partnership (including ministers) attended this very practical & helpful day.

Stephen Skinner

## Deanery Synod

Since becoming Deanery Synod Reps. in March 2008 we have attended 3 deanery synod meetings. Common themes for discussion between all the churches in our Deanery have been:

- The Diocesan Quota and the demands that this and rising fuel costs place upon our Churches. Swindon deanery has been commended for paying its quota in full during 2008: the diocese is keen to explain how this money is being spent and to listen to feedback from the churches about what is being asked of them.
- Encouraging lay ministry. Courses and conferences are being organised to enable people to take on greater pastoral and leadership responsibilities within the churches. Equipping God's People conference took place in Swindon in January with a full programme aimed at encouraging growth in our discipleship and numbers.
- Policies and procedures. Churches have a responsibility to ensure good guidelines are followed in respect of child protection and vulnerable adults.

Despite some long-term clergy illness the Swindon Deanery is looking to the future and keen to develop and encourage all its churches in growth and mission.

Mary Poole

**Swindon Deanery:** Since the autumn Area Dean Rob Burles has been working with a small team from around the Deanery. It's a broad look at the opportunities for Swindon Deanery as a new Diocesan Strategy emerges 'Releasing the Energy.' Four main strands map out the scope and the challenge (see below).

Rob visited the Partnership's ECC in October to gather its ideas on what people want from the Deanery - and he's visited most of the other parishes too. The working group is now reviewing all the information, facts and feelings, and starting to distil practical guide points for the Deanery's future – aiming to keep things relevant, clear and mission focussed. More on this as the work continues.

Ed Poole

## Bristol Diocese Growth Plan

Mention can be made of the development of the Diocesan Growth Programme & Diocesan Strategy, which will be relevant to our Partnership as we look towards the Anglican Pastoral Vacancy arising from March 2009:

- We spoke in our goals about looking to link with our communities too, and we really do have some specific ideas for how to do this in 2009 – see the section towards the end on 'goals'.

## Emerge Phaze

As part of the whole youth scene stimulated by Ncounter and Collective events at schools and in Purton & West Swindon, growth and development has taken place in the Phaze 2008. With its triple strands of Fun, Food & Faith for 11-14s almost 20 young people are at Holy Trinity Shaw on Fridays, 7-9pm until the summer

The final act of Phaze was to make a huge banner that expressed the joy this group has been and the sadness of the young people at it's stopping. Huge thanks to Mike Dilly, Jacqueline Kerwin and Judith Mumford for their leadership.

## Café Base West /REMIX Staffing

Fernando de Mello arrived from Brazil in September to volunteer for a year with Ncounter and has settled in really well to the team and the local area and is involved in every part of the emerge partnership as detailed below.

## Café Base/Remix

Café Base West, was re-launched as "Remix" in September 2008. We have a team of 8 from WSEP/Ncounter) each week. This year Remix has had contact with 120 different young people and had regular contact (ie at least twice monthly) with approx 60 of these, on average 35 attending each week. Each week we explore the Christian faith in (optional) small groups (split ages) using drama, discussion and games and linking to the Bible. 17 young people took part in a Youth Alpha course in the Spring. Many of the young people who attend Remix are also involved in other parts of the project which helps to build the relationships and extend their contact with the Christian faith.

## The Base – Youth Performing Arts facility, Purton Stoke

In 2008 we worked with 80 young people at the Base in 6 x 3 day workshops and 20 Saturday workshops during the year. Many of these were specifically for pupils with special needs. Funding for these came from Zurich, NPower and Community Foundation. Five volunteers from WSEP helped on occasions during the year with these workshops.

### Schools Out Club

This new group started in November '08, funded by NPower Ltd. We have two sessions each week led by Fernando and myself and mainly attended by young people attending other parts of the programme, but four completely new contacts have been made, two of whom now also attend Remix. In total we have seen 11 different young people. These sessions have provided good opportunities for young people to share difficult experiences in their lives, homes, schools etc., and on a few occasions we have looked at the Bible with the young people and prayed with them.

### G2G

This is a small discussion-based group led by WSEP volunteers for young people aged 14+ who have made, or are on the way to making, a Christian commitment of their own. Ncounter gap workers have supported each session of G2G in 2008. We continue to build positive links between G2G and the rest of the programme.

### School Lunch Clubs

Ncounter gap workers have teamed up with Christian youth workers in Bradon Forest and Greendown schools to lead Christian lunch clubs and have built positive relationships with young people there, seeing approx 45 weekly at Bradon and 15 at Greendown.

### Festival

Held in Lydiard Park during a very wet July day, we still managed to attract over 600 visitors to an event organised by Ncounter/WSEP as part of the emerge programme. With a full programme showcasing young people's performing skills in dance and music, different arts-based workshops and charity fundraising stalls by the young people this was a successful event which many volunteers from our local churches took part in.

Claire Camm

## The Christian Community and our Worship

### Membership

Membership of the Partnership is through the Local Churches, and each congregation is responsible for encouraging regular attendees into membership. Within our different church traditions there are slight differences in understanding of membership.

### Church Buildings

The ECC devolves the care and maintenance of our church buildings to the respective Local Church Councils whilst still being the legal body charged with their management. So, for example, applications for Faculties to allow work to be done in St Mary's, All Saints or Holy Trinity are brought to the ECC/PCC before being sent to the Diocesan Office for approval; work at Toothill Church needs Methodist approval.

### Finance

The ECC carries the responsibility of handling payments for:

- Our share of contributions to the Sponsoring Parent Bodies via: the Bristol Diocese, The Upper Thames Methodist Circuit, The West of England Baptist Association and the United Reformed Church. These payments contribute towards the cost of the full time stipendiary clergy and wider ministry.
- Ministerial and church fees for weddings and funerals
- Staff Expenses
- Salary for Partnership Administrator
- Stipend for a Baptist Minister when one is appointed
- Expenses incurred during a pastoral vacancy
- Support for Partnership-wide Youth work

More detailed information about Partnership Finances is in the Annual Accounts and Financial Statement.

For 2008 the Partnership made a planned loss.

For 2009 the budget is for a loss as churches are unable yet to meet the significantly increased costs from the Diocese. Our Diocesan share is increased by 3%. We plan to undertake an income survey in March 2009.

The Budget for 2009 shows a deficit of £2,200, but there is significant doubt over whether churches can make their contributions. There will be a major problem in 2010 unless we can increase church giving. We have reserves of almost £30,000 at the end of 2008, which should enable us to manage the deficit in 2009. (DG)

### Partnership Office

Our Administrator Brenda Hicks has been with us since June 2008. She keeps the office clean and our work up to date.

Dick Gray

## Wider Church

- All Saints ran a small but very effective Alpha in the autumn term at All Saints and we hope to run further courses in the near future.
- **Community Café.**
  - Early last year the Community Café coordinators approached Toothill about using their premises to run a café on Mondays. The partnership with them has been very fruitful with many regulars who come each week and enjoy not only good cheap food but a chance to chat. Relationships are growing and there was a joint Harvest Lunch cooked by the café, and enjoyed by café and church attenders alike. Christmas too provided opportunity to invite people from the café to take part in a service, and several attended this and other Christmas events.
- **Contact events**
  - The Partnership continues to put on social events across the churches and some of these have attracted visitors who are now beginning to come to our churches as a result of discovering that Christians are human and have something to offer

## Publicity and Communication

- We advertise monthly in the local Link Magazine, which includes information about our Partnership, the Office telephone number and email address.
- We especially promote our major festivals of Christmas, Lent, Holy Week and Easter. Cards are produced and delivered by some local churches. This year we produced joint information leaflets, through the Partnership Administrator. These show all the special Services and Events of this period. We also produce a joint Christmas Services card for distribution when we are out carol singing.
- Generally each local church is responsible for its own publicity – this is through their Monthly Magazines or Weekly Notice Sheets. Our web sites are becoming more comprehensive and traffic is building up, mostly as a result of the regular partnership news being read online, or downloaded.
- We also have our monthly magazine “In Partnership” which contains news of church and local events.
- Browse over to <http://WSwinLyd.org.uk/council/webbery> to see the usage graph.

## Buildings and Resources

## Membership Summary

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
All Saints	123	126	123	118	116	118	120	119
St Mary's	69	76	80	87	98	104	102	106
Holy Trinity	42	37	37	55	57	57	64	72
Toothill	37	35	34	41	42	41	44	48
Westlea	25	25	25	24	25	26	27	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	299	299	325	338	346	357	374

## Normal Sunday Attendance

Church	2008		2007		2006		2005		2004	
	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child
All Saints	87	20	81	20	82	24	81	26	86	27
St Mary's	47	5	53	10	50	10	57	10	64	11
Holy Trinity	33	10	34	11	32	10	37	15	37	16
Toothill	40	10	23	4	26	8	24	8	33	12
Westlea	22	11	22	11	21	13	21	14	22	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>56</b>	213	56	211	65	220	73	242	81

## Ministry

In addition to Staff Team of Ministers, we are grateful to the following members of the Partnership who assist with the leading of worship in our churches:

Methodist Local Preachers	<b>Mr Mark Dowling Mrs Rachel Dowling Mr Gordon Partridge</b>
Anglican Readers	<b>Mrs Di Benbow</b>
Non-Stipendiary Ministers	<b>Revd Mike Dilly (Baptist)</b>
Other Groups	<b>Westlea Leadership Team Local Church Home Group Members</b>

Stephen Skinner

## Weekly Services

The worship rota is arranged across the Partnership. The Staff Team, Local Preachers and our Reader all lead services and preach not only in their 'home' church but also in the other partner churches and churches in the Methodist Circuit.

Every Sunday there is a Partnership 8am Holy Communion at All Saints Church, which typically includes two Book of Common Prayer Services, one Free Church Service and one Common Worship Service each month.

Every Sunday evening All Saints & St Mary's Church hold an Evening Service, typically taken from Book of Common Prayer, Songs of Praise, Partnership Communion and Evening Prayer.

Both services have a regular and faithful congregation with attendees coming mainly from the host church.

Other Evening Services take place elsewhere. These include:

- All Saints: Taize, Iona, Healing, Communion and Praise Services
- Toothill: Meditation Services

Our main Services take place on a Sunday Morning with each of our Churches having a thriving and enthusiastic congregation with crèches, children's and young people groups also being provided. The communion services generally vary between Anglican order and a Free-Church style.

## Church & Schools

Between the churches and clergy we have good links with a variety of schools. Links with Lydiard Millicent School and Peatmoor School are very good. Members of All Saints serve as Governors, Vice Chair and Chair at both schools. Assemblies and RE lessons both in Church and school have been well received. We foresee these links deepening and there being increasing co operation in providing for children's spiritual needs.

There are also growing links with schools like Oliver Tomkins and Brookfield, wanting to visit our churches for lessons about what the church is and what the clergy do. Oliver Tomkins infants are building a tradition of visiting Toothill Church for an Ascension Day service too.. With the recent appointment of a Parent Support Advisor covering all 10 schools in West Swindon, we hope to continue to develop strategies to help and support both children and their parents and teachers.

## Partnership Marriage Preparation Sessions

We continue to offer Marriage Preparation sessions to all couples who marry at any of our partnership churches, and to those with weddings at St. Mary's Purton. The Staff Team work with Mike & Jane Haslam to offer an excellent package!

In 2008 we offered the alternative of one weekend (Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon), or two Wednesday evening sessions. Take up was slightly reduced this year, with preference for the weekend sessions. Around 20 couples participated in 2008.

The sessions cover: (1) "The five love languages", (2) "Communication & Conflict", (3) "Finance and Lifestyle", (4) "God's help in married life". There is ample opportunity for couples to privately talk through issues raised in each of the 1 hour sessions.

*Stephen Skinner*

## Mission

### Mission & Evangelism

- Alpha

'Road show' has been very successful and eirenic! The comments have been consolidated into a final draft, which is to be presented for adoption at the 2009 Partnership AGM.

*Stephen Skinner*

## Other Joint Partnership Ministries

### Joint Thanksgiving & Baptism policy

As an Ecumenical Partnership, we feel it essential to offer a variety of different types of "Christian Initiation", to respect our denominational traditions and theology, and the needs of those who come to us for a public affirmation of faith.

Thus we offer: Infant Baptism (often called 'Christening'), Thanksgiving, Dedication, and 'Believer's Baptism' (for those old enough to testify to their own faith in Jesus). These options are explained by our Ministers and Church Leaders to those who approach us for a Service of some kind. It has to be said that the vast majority of such enquiries are for the Infant Baptism of the traditional type – the numbers of these have in fact increased significantly in 2008 (see details in individual churches Annual Reports).

Sadly, we hold very few Services of 'Believer's Baptism', and our operational baptistery at Shaw has not been utilised in 2008. But there was a full immersion of a 'born again believer' in Lydiard Park Lake, conducted by myself last summer! Ways could be investigated to encourage more such 'Believer's Baptisms' with public testimony.

In all cases candidates and their families are visited at home by Ministers (and sometimes lay church members). Infant Baptism is never refused, but it may be delayed for the purposes of adequate preparation. Additional preparation meetings are held with parents and Godparents to explain to them the Christian faith into which their child is to be baptised. These normally produce some very challenging but worthwhile conversations!

*Stephen Skinner*

### Special Services

Our pattern of special Partnership Services has changed significantly in 2008, much affected by our "Fellowship Goal". We have felt that it has been time for a change from our recent traditions!

## Normal Morning Pattern of Worship

	LM – 10.30	LT – 10.00	HTS – 10.30	TH – 10.30	We – 10.00
<b>Week 1</b>	Morning Service	Morning Service	Communion	Communion	Communion
<b>Week 2</b>	Communion	Communion	Morning Service	Family Service	Family Service
<b>Week 3</b>	Family Service	Family Service	Communion	Morning Service	Morning Service
<b>Week 4</b>	Communion	Communion	Family Service	Morning Service	'Swap Over'
<b>Week 5</b>	Morning Service	Morning Service	Morning Service	Family Service	Communion

### Joint Partnership Worship

Several joint Services were organised again in 2008. The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Services have become a regular fixture now, and are supported by all churches. There is a question about having them on key Festival Sundays such as Pentecost or Advent. Possibly if a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday falls on such a Festival it would be better to hold it in the evening. An ECC issue!

The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday morning Services in 2008 were:

- Toothill (March 30<sup>th</sup>, post Easter!)
- St. Mary's (linking with their June Flower Festival)
- All Saints (August Bank Holiday)
- Shaw (as part of the John Hardwick Children's Ministry Weekend)

The joint Services in 2008 were as follows:

- Women's World Day of Prayer at St. Mary's.
- Holy Week Meditations at Toothill
- Good Friday "Hour at the Cross" at All Saints
- Easter Sunrise Service at St. Mary's
- Ascension Day Communion at All Saints
- United Ecumenical Confirmation Service at St. Mary's Purton
- Partnership Memorial Service at St. Mary's

Plus two special evening Services at Shaw, jointly led by Stephen Skinner and Claire Camm, were we learned more about the youth ministries of "Emerge", heard the Collective Band play, and prayed for their workers and ministry. These were well attended.

*Stephen Skinner*

## Partnership events

This is, of course one of our responses to Jesus new command. “Love one another” (John 13v34). They are great opportunities to meet others and put faces to names. I did. If you’ve not done so yet, go along to one hosted by a church other than yours, even if it’s not something you would have chosen. Go on encourage one another!

If you have ideas let your leaders know.

## Chair of ECC

“The world”, and much of the audience for our annual report, will judge our success by such criteria as:

- Good works –demonstrating that we benefit others, not ourselves. Jas 2vv14-17
- Reputation – do people think we are worthwhile? Acts 5:12-14

I prefer to see these in the terms that Jesus used - “Love your neighbour”. Let’s look at the 4 commands that Jesus left us and see how we measure up.

I’m not assessing us as individuals; I’d not do so well. I’m not looking at our local church communities; the five annual reports from our fellowships will address these areas. No, I am talking about the things we as partnership choose to do together, and those things that we should do together and struggle with!

1. The first of Jesus 2 great commandments (Mark 12vv30-32) – Love God...

I think we have done quite well across our partnership; we have successful joint services and joint meetings for study, prayer and just spending time with God. This was an area of focus on last year. I hope you took the opportunity to be encouraged and taught, though too few people did. Next year we will vary our focus, but still concentrate in this area. Please allow yourself to join in. God is worth our love, and our brothers and sisters have much to show us and lead us in.

2. Jesus “New command” (John 13v34) - “Love one another”

This is about the encouragement and practical help we give to our brothers and sisters in Christ across our partnership. Our social programme is popular and we’d like more. Many of those who go along to the events are

through G2G and Remix that young people will come to see the huge value of giving public testimony to their commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

## Safe to Grow

We have again updated the safe to grow policy, the new policy was approved by the ECC. It has now been put onto the partnership web site for every one to see.

We are almost fully compliant in having CRB checks for all our volunteers and staff who work with children and young people. Most churches have job descriptions for their children’s workers.

As a partnership we are endeavouring to keep up to date with new ideas and policies, to keep our children and young people safe. This is an ongoing process.

Dick Gray

## Constitution

### Partnership Constitution & Standing Orders

The Constitution Working Party continued into their 7<sup>th</sup> year of meetings, but thankfully concluded their work with their 57<sup>th</sup> Meeting!! This Group were able to obtain agreement from our 4 denomination (‘Parent’) bodies that our Draft 11 of the Constitution was acceptable to them.

Thanks are due to those Working Party members who stuck it to the very end: Ed Poole, Dick Gray, Chris Scarisbrick, and myself!! The handling of the subsequent follow up on the Constitution and Standing Orders now lies with the ECC Standing Committee.

The ECC are holding a special Partnership Service on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2009 where the Constitution will be formally signed by representatives of our 4 Parent Bodies, and of the Partnership itself.

The work continues of drawing up Standing Orders for the Partnership Council, Standing Committee, and subsequently helping Local Church Leadership Teams to produce their own, in a way congruent with the partnership. A draft of those for the Partnership Council has been sent to all Church Leadership Teams over the Autumn / Winter, and opportunity given for face to face response to Chris Scarisbrick and Stephen Skinner. This

for which I ask your forbearance and forgiveness. But I want to end by thanking you for travelling God's journey with me and for all I've been inspired to learn from you!!

*Stephen Skinner*

## Pastoral Care & Occasional Offices

The Wider Staff Team continues to conduct many Weddings & Funerals in addition to Baptisms, Thanksgivings & Dedications which are mentioned elsewhere in this Report. They are a valuable opportunity to offer sensitive practical support, pastoral care and sharing of the Good News of Jesus. We also offer Renewal of Marriage Vows (following a Civil Ceremony, or at a Wedding anniversary), and Memorial Services (usually some while after a Funeral).

By far the majority of Weddings take place at the historic churches of St. Mary's or All Saints. Numbers of Weddings remained encouragingly high in 2008 (stable compared to 2007), but look set to drop significantly in 2009. There were just a few Services for Renewal of Marriage Vows.

In contrast, quite a few Funerals take place in our newer churches also – especially at Toothill, because of its strong community links. Shaw also holds a few Funerals each year – usually of church members. St. Mary's now holds very few Funeral Services, partly because demand for burials in Hook Cemetery is few and far between now. The greater number of Funerals is at All Saints, because of its rural status within the Lydiard Millicent village community.

Overall, the number of Funerals conducted by the clergy at the Kingsdown Crematorium has dropped very significantly in 2008. We suspect that this sharp decline has to do with the fact that quite a few mourners are opting for a Humanist or Civil Service rather than an explicitly Christian one. The Anglican Deanery is in conversation with Funeral Directors about this situation.

Finally we continue our collaboration with Purton on our joint Confirmation Services. These are held annually, with the most recent, in Spring 2008 being at Purton. We welcomed the Bishop of Swindon to conduct this Service. The preacher was the Methodist Minister in Wootton Bassett, Revd Steve Cullis. Numbers being confirmed reached an all-time low in 2008, with the Service only just proving to be viable. It seems that our younger people still don't feel the need to make any public profession of faith in this way, or in 'Believer's Baptism'. We hope that as our youth work develops

the ones who already know people in the other churches – Next year bring some friends who don't! If you've not been along to one yet, allow yourself to grow to love people you don't yet know. The social programme will continue, and though is not a specific goal for 2009, we will talk about it a lot!

3. Great commission (Matt 28v19) – “Go and make disciples of all nations” Are we as a partnership growing numerically? No. In some parts we see signs of increasing numbers, in other places not so much. We hold our own, and this is good, but is not “making disciples of all nations”. We cannot leave this to our clergy and sermons in church, fine though they are. We must find more ways to get “out there”. We need to team up to resource this work as we cannot do it all individually or as separate churches our partnership must work with other churches and Christian organisations. The harvest field is white, we should be organised.

It also has to be said there is a necessary precursor. The world has no obligation to take us seriously, until we are clearly and publicly living the gospel already, read on...

4. The second of Jesus' 2 great commandments (Mark 12v30-32) “Love your neighbour”

Here I believe Jesus was not specifically talking about our Christian brothers and sisters, here He is talking about the people around us who don't already know Him and need to. There are many sections of society who have very practical needs too. I hear about huge social deprivation, disadvantage and abuse. Needs that we cannot hope to address as individual people, and we would struggle to find enough people from our individual churches. We, again, need to team up across the partnership and much, much wider; to work with the voluntary sector and statutory authorities to mend our world.

A recent example: Right now, we need people to help chat to parents of school-children, who are having problems. Tea and toast breakfasts – think of the community cafe, but they organised through primary schools. If you have (or have had) teenage children, we need your experience. It's scary but not difficult, and it's so, so valuable. Tell Anne if you could find it in you. Frankly, it would be worth taking a regular morning off work...

You will see more of initiatives like this being talked about this year as we make this one of our goals. Please consider stepping outside your comfort zone, this year.

## Ecumenical team leader's report

This Report, written two weeks before my final departure from West Swindon, inevitably has the sense of being a 'valedictory', giving me the privileged opportunity to comment not only upon the last year, but also on the best part of the seven years that I have been Team Rector and Team Leader of our Partnership.

It is important to set my personal struggles in 2008 against the overall sense of fulfilment that I have experienced over the whole period since 2002. The decision of my 'Review of Ministry' by the Bishop of Swindon, to not extend my License, was a severe blow to my sense of self-worth. I did not find the actual review process to be very supportive, and I hope very much that future Reviews for other ministers will be more pastorally caring. But ultimately I believe the decision for me to look for a new job was in the longer term purposes of God. You will know that I will be commencing a new ministry as Team Rector of the Golden Cap in south Dorset / east Devon from March 14<sup>th</sup> 2009. This is another very challenging post, with oversight of 13 churches in a mixed rural / urban / tourist setting. But I never seek for 'plum' or easy jobs, and God has certainly taken me at my request! I thank those of you who have offered prayer and pastoral support over this searching period – especially at St. Mary's.

Taking the longer view, I believe that our Partnership has progressed forward over the past seven years. Here are some evidences of this:

- There has been a real measure of healing, from some of the resentments and divisions of previous years (especially over relative authority of different denominations in the partnership). A better balance between non Anglican Ministers and Anglican ministers in the Staff Team helps this.
- We are worshipping together with greater frequency and in greater numbers than in the past. The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Morning Services have been a real highlight, with a strong sense of our coming together as fellow Christians before our Lord, in Spirit inspired worship.
- There are more opportunities for social interaction, through a greater variety of partnership social events. These are really important opportunities; not only for building relationships, but to invite others in mission outreach.

- We are coming together in a more 'spiritual' way also, it seems to me. After two years of Goals in the field of 'Prayer' we are seeing the value of varying types of prayer more, and seeing the partnership Lent & Summer Bible study courses thriving. An emphasis on love of God's Word in 2009 will further stimulate our walk with God.
- Our Youth work has developed over the past few years in a way that we can be justifiably proud of. Our stronger priority in this area began some years ago through Confirmation Classes, Weekends at Viney Hill, and Youth Leader Meetings. Our work on Tuesday evenings at Shaw with what is now called Remix, deserves greater practical involvement to keep progressing.
- Our Governance has, I believe, moved to a sounder footing, despite hiccups along the way, especially when Rachael Williams and Claire Beaton left as Partnership Administrators. We now have a legal Constitution, and Standing Orders close behind! Our ECC Standing Committee meets regularly – but I believe needs some reorganisation in 2009 to release ministers' time.
- It's with great pleasure that I can also record that our Sunday attendances are at long last beginning to move upward, after a very long period of sometimes substantial decline and then stagnation. Numbers are certainly not everything, but they are an indicator of our spiritual health. We've also been able to pay our 'Diocesan Share' for several years and repaid 'debts'.
- After two years of searching in 2006 and 2007, we finally appointed two new stipendiary Ministers to the partnership, in Anne Carter & Tudor Roberts. It has been worth the wait, because both are extremely committed, gifted and hard working ministers. But it's worth remembering several years when I plus some others on the Staff Team were seriously overloaded to carry the whole.
- Our Partnership has begun to be more mission minded and outward looking. The ultra-slow pace of this 'turning outward' with Christ's love has been very frustrating to me, but I think 2009's Goals will move that necessary process forward. It's best achieved by working in partnership with other organisations in West Swindon – especially our schools, where our connections are so good!

So, I hope I leave West Swindon & the Lydiards having played my full part in cooperating with the Spirit in sustaining and nudging our partnership forward. I am only too aware of my fallibilities, mistakes and weaknesses,