

A brief summary of the churches and their context...

EMMANUEL CHURCH, CHESHAM

Emmanuel was a mission church, planted from St Mary's in 1887, and had its first vicar in the 1980s. It is a vibrant, friendly, socially mixed conservative Anglican evangelical church that is one of a group of churches in the Parish of Great Chesham. We have three Sunday gatherings at 9am, 11am and 7pm. Across the three services on a Sunday, we usually see around 180 adults and 60 children. We seek to be a warm, loving community where we serve one another, and in which people are well supported and cared for.

We have a current staff team at Emmanuel of a Vicar, a minister for evangelism, a part time administrator, a ministry trainee, and are seeking to replace our families and women's worker. We work as part of a wider Parish Team under the oversight of the Team Rector, Simon Cansdale, along with vicars of the other churches, a Parish administrator, and Youth and Children's Workers (based at St Mary's).

We are committed to every member ministry, and are dependent on a large number of mature, gifted men and women who lead and serve in many different capacities at Emmanuel, with mid-week ministries to Babies & Toddlers, youth, adults with learning disabilities and Seniors; outreach into the community through the ministry of Christians Against Poverty, schools work, Messy Church; and then Sundays with a lively children's work with crèche and Flyers groups, and a Pathfinders group for years 7-9.

We have a vision for the town and the whole world through various mission partners, but our geographical District within the Parish includes the Pond Park area of Chesham, for which we have felt a special responsibility over the years, and we have prayed about how we might reach the residents more effectively. We have tried various different ministries, but we believe that our partnership with Hivings Free Church and the vision for a revitalized, local church in the area is God's answer to our prayers.

For more information about Emmanuel and our vision and values, go to www.emmanuelchesham.org

HIVINGS FREE CHURCH

Hivings Free Church was founded in 1962 under a Baptist trust by a group of free churches in Chesham, with a desire to be a beacon on the hill for the local community. Over the years it has reached out into the local community, especially to the young with uniformed organisations, holiday clubs and other activities; and more recently has been a major founder of At the Edge, supporting teenagers in the area. There is a weekly toddlers group, a weekly seniors group, a monthly 'Knit & Natter' group and a monthly tea for those who live alone. It has never been a large church, or one to which many people have driven, as it has served the local community, led by elected deacons, and by a pastor (usually part time). The church went through a tough period with some bereavements and key members moving away, but it has enjoyed some renewed encouragement through the gospel partnership with Emmanuel. The current membership is 21, with an average Sunday attendance of 25-35. The connections with families in the community have been re-growing, with a successful summer holiday club, and monthly Messy Church that sees 70-80 local people attending.

The building is a strategic hub in the community, and is used well by community groups - police & councillors' surgeries, a pop-in club for over 30's, the Pond Park Community Association, Guides and Brownies, an IT education venue for those with learning needs and a ukulele group. All these provide opportunities to engage with those outside the church community, and to communicate the good news of Jesus in word and deed. The vision of the church, back in 2009, was to be a welcoming and supportive fellowship; to lead individuals to faith and discipleship and to recognize and use people's gifts in the church and the community.

The current deacons and membership have agreed to move towards the formal closure of Hivings Free Church and join with members and leaders from Emmanuel church, to preserve and develop the ongoing work of gospel in the area, through the establishing of a new, revitalised community church.



“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain”- Psalm 127:1

OUR CONTEXT

Chesham

Chesham is a market town in the beautiful Chiltern Hills, at the very end of the Metropolitan Line, with a population of about 30,000. Chesham is hard to categorise. It is not wealthy south Bucks, though there are some big houses. There are considerable pockets of poverty and social deprivation, and the High Street has struggled, along with many others, in recent years, but is now turning around. As we are at the end of the tube line, many people move here either because it's cheaper than being closer into London, and/or because we are a town surrounded by open space and there are some excellent schools.

Chesham has a Mosque and a significant Muslim community, many of whom originally came from Pakistan. Chesham is a little quirky, truth-be-told. It's not picture postcard pretty, though you are out in the beautiful Chilterns very quickly, and it is a town that offers a sense of community and is a wonderful place to live. Access to London via the Metropolitan Line is good; larger shopping centres of Watford and High Wycombe are not far away, and we are close to the M25, M1 & M40 motorways.

Pond Park / Hivings

The local community is almost wholly residential, containing approaching 2000 homes. There has been considerable building in the area over recent years, including homes for key workers. A major part of the community is recognised as disadvantaged, for example having had a very high infant death rate. As a result, the community has been targeted in recent years by the local authority under a public services agreement intended to improve participation in voluntary & community groups. The Thames Valley Police have recently identified the community as one of the areas requiring additional support, and have entered into partnership with the Cinnamon Network, financially supporting local projects.

Apart from the church, there is a small parade of shops up on the hill, a local primary school - Ivingswood Academy, with about 180 children attending, and a small private members club.