

Church Langley Church Parish Profile

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Overview

Church Langley is a 1990's development of about 3,500 homes situated on the outskirts of Harlow Town. Church Langley Church is an ecumenical partnership between the Church of England, Baptist and United Reformed Churches. This partnership is much more than a building share; worship, fellowship and outreach are interdenominational. The patron is the incumbent of the neighbouring parish of Old Harlow

Church Langley Church seeks to be Christ centred, Bible based and Holy Spirit empowered. The church encourages both lay and ordained ministry and the elected eldership shares in the responsibility of leadership.



The church does not own its own building; it meets in the neighbourhood Church and Community Centre. It has exclusive use of a suite of rooms within the Centre, including a chapel. Sunday services are held in the main hall of the Centre. Attendance at Sunday services averages around 34 adults and 9 children. The congregation is very diverse, in terms of ethnicity (a sizeable proportion of African origin) and denominational backgrounds.

The congregation is small for the size of the parish, but we are keen to grow, and to raise the profile of the church within the community. We are open to new ideas, being flexible, adaptable and tolerant. Although we come from various denominations unity exists and we seek to work together as one church to proclaim the gospel. In recent years, the church has initiated a number of outreach projects (see section "Outreach and Mission"). Although these have attracted some new members, due to the transient nature of the local population, overall membership numbers have remained fairly static.

The following are considered essential qualities for the successful candidate:

- *A heart for mission* - Church Langley has proved a difficult area in which to make an impact; developing (& facilitating) an effective outreach strategy will be a key task.
- *Supportive of the ecumenical partnership* which is central to the church, welcoming the opportunity to work with ministers and members of the other denominations.
- *Community oriented* - Raising the profile of the church by developing relationships with key people within the community, will be important.

The applicant for this position will need to be committed to the ecumenical nature of Church Langley Church. Whilst the Church does not fit into any traditional denominational pattern, we make every effort to practice and encourage all celebrations of life and commitment associated with all of the ecumenical partners. The ecumenical aspect of our work is our primary concern, but we are in addition the Anglican Parish Church for Church Langley.

Whoever is appointed to this position would be expected to work with other leaders of the partnership and the lay team (who include an Anglican Licenced Lay Minister, a Baptist Lay Pastor, a Parish Evangelist and the appointed elders).

This ministry is fully based at Church Langley Church, although as the non-Anglican ecumenical partners lead some Sunday services, there would be the opportunity to worship as part of the Church Langley Church congregation, or for some other local mission or similar activity to be carried out on those days. For clarity, the appointee would not be expected to take services at other URC/Methodist churches in HAEBEA (Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area), nor at Potter Street Baptist Church on an exchange basis, although we do encourage close links within our partner denominations which may lead to ministry invitations.

We look forward to meeting whoever feels they could work within such a flexible arrangement.

Church Langley Parish

The parish is divided into two distinct areas - the area of Church Langley itself and also the southern part of the newer Newhall development, of which the larger northern part lies in the parish of St Mary with St Hugh (Old Harlow). For a map of the parish boundary, see our entry on “A Church Near You”¹.

Church Langley

In 1992 Church Langley was just green fields; today it is a modern village development consisting of about 8900 people living in 3,513 households (March 2019²). Although the majority of the households contain children, 23% are single person households. It is typical of modern, medium-density developments, having a mixture of houses and low-rise flats. The residents are a diverse mix of families, retired and single people, with a large professional and commuter element. There is a mix of permanent households and a significant transient population. Church Langley represents about 10% of the population of Harlow; however, most of the amenities are outside Church Langley.

Newhall³

The development of Newhall began in the late 1990’s, with a planned population of around 6000. It was deliberately designed differently to Church Langley, the intention being to create a “real” estate conserving natural assets, having areas of clearly differing character, and providing focal points within the estate. Because green spaces have been created within the area, in order to maintain government-defined housing density targets, the actual housing areas have a higher density than Church Langley.

The parish boundary line lies in the middle of the main street into Newhall (“The Chase”). The part within the Church Langley parish includes the estate's housing-association-owned social housing.

The Church

Church Langley Church started to meet together in 1994, and was founded as a joint, ecumenical venture by St Mary Magdalene of the nearby Potter Street Parish, Potter Street Baptist Church and the local United Reformed Church. It moved from its lowly start in a Portakabin to the Community Centre in August 1996. In 2000, the Anglican component became formally separated from the St Mary Magdalene, Potter Street parish and became a parish in its own right. “Church Langley Church” was created as a separate legal entity (separate from the Church of England parish) by a sharing agreement between the Anglican, United Reformed Church and Roman Catholic denominations and Potter Street Baptist Church.



The Centre building houses both the Church and a Community Centre, which have very close ties. Within the building are a main hall,

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nation/statistics
graphics of Newhall.

seating about 200, a smaller hall, seating around 80 and a Chapel which seats about 30. There is a central kitchen and toilet facilities are attached to each hall.

In 2011 the Chapel was extended to include a meeting room with kitchen facilities, an upstairs office and a disabled toilet. The work was paid for by external grants and very generous gifts from the church members. These are facilities that could be more utilised for outreach.



The Chapel and annex are dedicated solely to Church use, while the two halls are shared with the Community Association. The Church's Sunday service takes place in the main hall (which must be set out and tidied away on each occasion). Primary school aged children meet in the smaller hall (Sunday Club), whilst secondary school aged young people meet in the annex office (Upper Room).

The Community Centre has a wide range of activities throughout the day and evening covering educational as well as social activities and a pre-school. Because of the constitutional links between them - the Anglican Vicar and the United Reformed Church minister (or their nominated representatives) are "by right" Church representatives on the committee - the Church has the power of veto on any undesirable use of the building. The Community Association (a statutory limited company charity) is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. (Copies are available from the Church secretary).

The Church has entire use of the building on Sundays, Christmas Day and Good Friday until 1pm and is able to purchase additional periods of use when available. The Community Association, not the Church, is responsible for the upkeep of the building.

The Community Centre is positioned beside a large communal car park, which also serves the adjacent medical centre and a large Tesco Store. Other nearby facilities include a pub with restaurant and adjoining hotel, sports field, fishing lake and one of the two primary schools located in Church Langley.

The Church has its own website (www.churchlangleychurch.org). Church Langley Church also advertises services and events via a local, regular monthly magazine. There are no support staff at present.

There is a modern 4 bedroom vicarage, with good size rooms, situated within 1 mile of the Church building. This has a front and rear garden, ample car parking and incorporates a large study/parish office.

Church and Church Programme

This section details activities as they were happening before the Covid-19 restrictions imposed in March 2020. In the period since, we have continued worship through home worship sheets (provided by HAEBEA) and online services (provided by Church Langley Church and Potter Street Baptist Church). Small groups have continued online using Zoom and there is a Zoom fellowship/catch-up meeting in place of the Sunday morning coffee time.

Services

Sunday services start at 10am and generally run to 11:15am. These have an informal style. Worship is key for many in our services, and we are blessed to have gifted musicians to lead us. Where once there was a clear demarcation between Anglican and Free Church services, now it is not uncommon for elements of a service to be led by ministers and/or lay leaders of the different traditions represented within the church. At least 2 services a month are Holy Communion.

Sunday Club, for the over 4's who are children of adults present in the main service, runs concurrently with the service as does Upper Room which provides a programme of activities for secondary school aged children. The Chapel is available for younger children and their parents to use as a crèche. Refreshments are served after the service, which is a time for fellowship and prayer ministry. Currently, all-age services are held on the 2nd Sunday of the month, where the whole church stays together and local uniformed organisations (e.g. Brownies and Rainbows) are encouraged to attend.

There is a twice monthly communion service held in the chapel on Thursday mornings.

Other occasional additional services are held, including our annual Carols by Candlelight service and in recent years we have held a memorial service.

Small Groups

Members are encouraged to meet together in small groups for prayer, Bible study and sharing. There is a house group meeting on Monday evenings and a Bible study group on Wednesday evenings. These meet twice a month. We have also had a daytime group on Tuesday afternoons, led by the previous vicar. There is currently a weekly prayer meeting on Tuesday evenings, facilitated using Zoom.

The church has also held both men's and ladies breakfast meetings, though recently both groups have been invited to join with the monthly men's and ladies' breakfasts at Potter Street Baptist Church.

The church has also held a number of 'away days' and 2 church weekends away. These have been appreciated as a time for fellowship, sharing and growing together.

Outreach and Mission

The church has recently followed the principles laid out in the LYCIG course (Lead Your Church into Growth) to plan our mission. We have organised a number of outreach activities, and community-based activities which have helped establish local contacts. These have included:

Messy Church – run 3-4 times a year.

Alpha Course – ran in 2018 and 2019.

Coffee Stop – meets Thursday mornings during school term time, providing a contact point for the local community.

CL Voices, community choir – run since 2015, attracting up to 50 members (mix of church and non-church). Rehearsals leading to well attended spring and autumn concerts.

'Rock' Youth Group – this ran from 2011 to 2016, until discontinued due to declining interest from the target age group.

In association with the community centre, organised 2 Community Fayres, with Jesus deck and prayer stations, and various church and community stalls.

Although we have regularly attracted new members (around 20 in the last 10 years), we have lost a similar number of members (Church Langley tends to have a transient population), and so overall our membership numbers have been static.

The church seeks to work with other local churches whenever possible and also supports local, national and international charities.

Church Leadership

The leadership currently consists of a team of three ministers (one from each denomination, although the Anglican and United Reformed Church posts are currently vacant), a Baptist Lay Pastor, a Licenced Lay Minister and an elected eldership. The church has a full written Constitution, based on the concept of the priesthood of all believers and there is no elected separate PCC (all Anglican members are members of the PCC for voting on Anglican matters). Congregational meetings, at which any decisions are made, are held 4 times/year and are open to all Church members. There are two routes into membership, both requiring baptism, as laid down in the Constitution.

The church membership has a wide range of gifts and talents and are encouraged in appropriate use of these. Congregational involvement in the Sunday services includes Scripture reading, leading worship and intercessions, serving communion, a prayer ministry team and providing music. Additionally, the membership is responsible for arranging the hall for the services, clearing up afterwards and serving the refreshments.

The Congregation

Church Langley Church seeks to be Christ centred Bible based and Holy Spirit empowered in all it does in worship, fellowship and outreach. We believe in the richness of Christian experience that unites us in Christ. The church is ecumenical, integrating all into a single congregation where all its members come together as one body to worship God. It has a wide age range but is underrepresented in the young adult age range.

We always seek to be a friendly and welcoming church, trying to ensure that no one leaves without being greeted by more than one person. Our after-service refreshments are a key part of our fellowship and during this time prayer ministry is available if required. The congregation is keen to grow and raise the profile of the church within the community. We are open to new ideas, being flexible, adaptable and tolerant. Although we come from various denominations unity exists and we seek to work together as one church to proclaim the gospel.

The congregation responds positively to all ministers, irrespective of denomination and the leadership and elders encourage the use of all spiritual gifts in line with 1 Corinthians 14 v1, 3 for the building up of the whole church.

We desire that our weekly services build up the whole body of believers as well as encourage and challenge those who are seeking for Spiritual reality. We hold wholeheartedly to the central theme of God's redeeming love revealed in the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and that the Holy Spirit is among us.

Finance

The general income of the church in 2019 was £42,432. The church has a good record of paying its full Parish Share; though in recent years in order to do this, we have been drawing on our reserves. The church also contributes to the ministry of the Baptist Church and United Reform Church (through HAEBEA) and the church aims to donate 10% of its income to mission and charitable causes.

In recent years, our expenditure has exceeded income and reserves have been reduced. The congregation has responded well to appeals in recent years (both to help individuals in need and to restore the church reserves), though the level of regular giving remains a concern.

The Church in Harlow

Harlow has up to 50 Christian congregations representing a wide spectrum of traditions and practices. Many denominations are represented in the town and the traditional denominational leaders work extremely well together. There is the opportunity for good supportive relationships and church leaders meet for a monthly prayer breakfast and cluster together in various groups for support. 'Heart 4 Harlow' is a cross-denominational movement of Christians engaging in mission and partnership as to all areas of local life (see further under "Deanery Vision" below). Harlow also has its own hospital chaplaincy team.

As a Local Ecumenical Partnership, Church Langley Church has very good relationships with Potter Street Baptist Church, whose minister plays an active part in the ministry team at CLC and have historically had good relationships with the HAEBEA local circuit. However, latterly the HAEBEA involvement in the church has been reduced due to their staffing issues.

Harlow and Area

Harlow was a "New Town", whose construction was started in the late 1940's to accommodate people mainly from the East End of London after the war. It is located on the Essex/Hertfordshire Border and has a population of around 80,000.

Harlow is well-provided with transport links as it is on the A414 close to J7 of the M11 (and junction 7a, currently under construction), thereby providing rapid road links to the M25 and London in the south) and to Cambridge in the north, as well as to both east and west (and the M1). It has two mainline railway stations which link into London (Liverpool Street) and to Cambridge and is within a short drive of the Central Line station at Epping. Stansted Airport is a 20-minute drive to the North and is also accessible by direct rail link.

Harlow town has a number of significant shopping areas of varying sizes. The Water Gardens retail development in the Town Centre offers shopping and dining opportunities that complement the Harvey Centre indoor shopping complex; still further retail development is planned for the Town Centre. There are also large retail parks in the north of the town offering DIY stores, electrical outlets, furniture shops, dining and a multiplex cinema.

There is good provision for recreational needs. The town has a large Town Park, riverside walks and dining, a leisure centre with swimming pool, an active theatre and a cinema. Several gardening centres are in the immediate area. In addition, many pleasant countryside and local village walks are within a short drive. There are also some sites of historical interest, and a museum.

Harlow was traditionally a manufacturing town. However, the manufacturers moved out and Harlow became the second largest research and development centre in the country, after Cambridge. These activities are now being reduced and the council is reviewing its strategy.

Whereas Church Langley, as a new development, has a high proportion of owner-occupiers, some housing association properties and some buy-to-rent properties,

Harlow has a high proportion of local authority owned housing. Social factors have led to many areas of social deprivation within the town. This has particularly affected young people. There is a drug culture within the town, and nuisance crime is evident.

Harlow has its own large hospital with an Accident & Emergency department. Local health centres can be found throughout the town.

Harlow has a range of educational and learning facilities: there are 35 primary schools, six secondary schools and a Further Education College and Department of Anglia Ruskin University.

Harlow & Villages Deanery Vision

This is a moment of opportunity in [Harlow Deanery](#). In our appointments we are seeking to prioritise mission outside the walls of the church, both people and buildings. In other words, the priority is the wider world, not being chaplains to existing Christian communities.

With our mixed demographic of rural and town, and with significant and active partnership between Christian churches, God is equipping and leading us as we seek to grasp the increasing number and range of opportunities and challenges to be salt and light through mission and evangelism in the wider community.

There is one formal Mission Unit (that of the 6 villages to the east of the Deanery). The remaining parishes network and to a large extent are already collaborating as a second Mission Unit. The clergy of this area have recently begun meeting together (replacing Chapters on those occasions.) The Deanery Mission & Pastoral Committee seeks to oversee.

Increasing collaboration, cross-parish initiatives, and lay training have helped prepare the way for the major challenges of stipendiary-clergy reductions in the Diocese including locally. God has been preparing us for this moment; and the reductions give fresh urgency to growing collaboration in mission and ministry, especially amongst the parishes on the west side of the deanery including Harlow town parish and in particular among the parishes of “CM17” (Old Harlow, Church Langley and St Mary Magdalene).

Indeed, Deanery-wide mission is central to our vision reflecting the close links between the communities across the area. This is especially expressed through [Heart4Harlow](#), which the Deanery has played a vital role in establishing. Heart4Harlow may be described as a movement which seeks to draw together Christians of all denominations in mission, partnership and engagement across the area. It has developed 5 Core Groups to spearhead:

- Commerce (shops and Business)
- Civic (Local authority and councillors, MP, police and fire services)
- Art, Culture and Education (schools, college, arts associations)
- Health and well-being (charities and community groups, NHS and the care sector)
- Churches and chaplaincy.

In so doing we seek to work with all of goodwill, serving our communities, “church and community working together”.

Likewise central to our vision is “Lay Ministry”. To this end, we have sought to facilitate and encourage local training through [“The Harlow and Deanery Programme.”](#)

Such collaboration does not seek to undermine worship-traditions but on the contrary believes that valuing such diversity is a vital key to unity. Whoever is appointed may anticipate working increasingly closely with adjoining parishes and their leadership teams. At the heart of creation is that diversity in unity found in our creator God; and this is what we seek to be, rooted in Christ, a witness to the world.

The Diocese: A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP GULI



Covering Essex and East London, Chelmsford is one of the largest, most diverse and exciting dioceses in the Church of England. We are home to more than 3 million people representing almost all socio-economic, ethnic and faith groups and a fantastic variety of cultures and traditions.

Our mission is to be a transforming presence in every community, open and welcoming to everyone and living out God's love for all people.

In the short time since I have been Diocesan Bishop, from March 2021, I have witnessed people's great warmth and heard stories about the wonderful things going on in our parishes.

We are looking for priests who are excited about our mission and excited about leading church communities; communities that are demonstrating the love of Christ in word and action, looking outwards to the needs of the world and sharing the good news of the gospel.

Of course, like many dioceses in the Church of England we face significant challenges. The decrease in national subsidy that helps us to pay clergy stipends has left us with a significant annual deficit that we must deal with. At the same time, we have a large number of vacant clergy posts that we have struggled to fill. Across the Church of England, church attendance has been in decline as has financial giving. In Essex and East London we also have some of the largest areas of population growth in the country where our challenge is to establish new and vibrant Christian communities. And of course, we do not yet fully understand the long-term impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

For these reasons and others, I sense the whole Church of God is at this current time in a liminal season when we cannot clearly see the future and we don't quite know what it will look like. It is in this context that I am starting my ministry as Bishop of Chelmsford. My plan is to listen, learn and discern with others what the best way forward is for our Church. To ensure that we build on the great work that is taking place in many of our churches and worshipping communities and to enable us to change and adapt where we need to. I do so in the knowledge that the Church has faced profound challenges in the past and I do so with faith that when we open ourselves up to being changed and transformed, we are best placed to serve God and God's people.

Any new priest joining us in the Diocese of Chelmsford does so at a time of challenge, a time of change and most significantly a time of hope for our Church in this most diverse and exciting of dioceses.

+Guli

Bishop of Chelmsford

The Future

Church Langley Church presents a firm foundation of committed people looking to the future. We seek a minister who will help seek God's will for us, and who will build on this foundation. To this end they will:

- love Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord;
- be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- develop their own giftings, in service to the church;
- be aware of the gifts of the congregation, and use these in the furtherance of the church's ministry and their spiritual growth;
- be alert to the pastoral needs of members of the congregation;
- not be afraid to adopt a role as coordinator when necessary rather than attempting to be all things to all people;
- be able to share in the ministry with the other denomination appointees, the licenced lay minister and the parish evangelist.

Arising from these, we would hope that:

- we would grow in number through contact with and outreach to the surrounding community;
- members of the congregation would be encouraged to develop their giftings;
- good relationships with other churches would be further developed and maintained;
- modern technologies would be harnessed in the spreading of God's word.

There are challenges and opportunities, for the person of God's choosing, to seek the expansion of His kingdom within the local community and to grow with us in the knowledge and love of God. Above all, we want to be open to the Holy Spirit and to know His leading in all things.

This profile has been prayerfully considered and written as a brief guide to Church Langley Church. There will be parts that will need more explanation and further information can be found on the Church website – www.churchlangleychurch.org. Thank you for taking time to read the profile. We pray with you and for you as you seek God's guidance in the next stage of your ministry for Him.

*Parish Profile Committee
August 2021*