



All Saints'
Little Totham



St Nicholas'
Tolleshunt Major



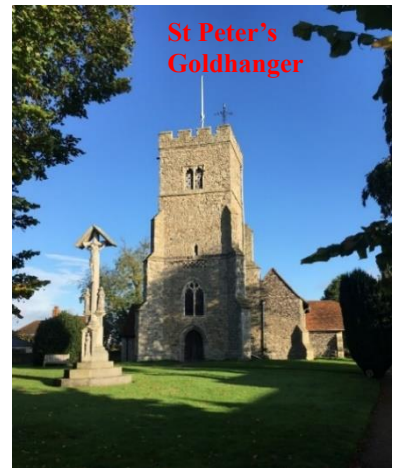
St. Peter's
Great Totham



St Nicholas'
Tolleshunt D'Arcy



Blackwater
Benefice



St Peter's
Goldhanger



St Mary the Virgin
Tollesbury



St Mary the Virgin
Salcott

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Welcome from Bishop Roger, Area Bishop of Colchester



I am deeply passionate about the rural church. I love the intimacy of worship in our smaller village churches where all who go really do count; where they know and are known. I am excited about the opportunities for evangelism in a church with such porous boundaries that almost everyone believes that the church is their church and the vicar is their vicar. I am thrilled by the way the church members seep into the wider community, reaching the parts that, in other settings, the church does not reach. And I am hugely impressed by the ingenuity and foresightedness of the rural church which has been at the forefront of developments like Local Ministry Teams, Authorised Lay Ministry and Locally Ordained Ministers. It has always been clear to me that the rural church is not a sleepy backwater of the Church of England. It is a place of innovation and reimagination.

The people of The Blackwater Benefice have been at the forefront of this kind of innovation for years. The parishes were involved in the very early development of Local Ministry Teams and 'Ministry as Partnership' at the start of the new millennium. They were among the first parishes to identify candidates for Locally Deployed Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry (a form of Locally Ordained Ministry). Over the last decade, these parishes have 'produced' an ordinand every two years (on average). They have also pioneered a Parish Nursing Project as well as being the location for some ground-breaking work with children and young people through Fellowship Afloat (a local Christian Outdoor Activity charity based on a converted lightship).

These parishes also respond creatively to the needs of their communities. A new initiative, working with FCN and YANA, has seen farmers and agricultural workers gathering for a lunch based around well-being and mutual support. The villages are all part of the Essex Climate Focus Area (CFA) which has been created to pilot accelerated climate action and showcase best practice in sustainable land stewardship, in collaboration with local councils, charities, residents, landowners and businesses. Tollesbury has an active Climate Partnership and has led onto some exciting projects including the de-carbonisation of Tollesbury Primary School.

The Blackwater Benefice is no sleepy backwater. It is a place of innovation and reimagination. It is a place of inspiration and invention. It is a place where the church is at the heart of the people – and good people are at the heart of the church. I can't think of a more exciting place to live, work and minister.

Rt Revd Roger Morris
Area Bishop of Colchester

The Wider Context: The Diocese of Chelmsford: 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 many socio-economic, ethnic and faith groups and a fantastic variety of cultures and traditions.

We have enormous opportunities for mission and service and considerable challenges to face and resolve as we continue to deal with the long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and global challenges that have a direct impact on our parish churches and the communities we serve.

My sense is that the whole Church of God is in a liminal season when we cannot clearly see the future and so don't quite know what it will look like. But we know that the Church has faced profound challenges in the past and as we look to the future we 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.

It is within this context and following a period of listening and discernment that started when I became Bishop of Chelmsford in 2021, that we have begun to articulate our future direction of travel as a Diocese with a focus on [travelling well together](#):

- Our purpose is to love God and to love our neighbour; to worship faithfully and empowered by the Holy Spirit, witness to the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ as we serve the extraordinarily diverse array of local communities in Essex and East London.
- Our approach is to enable and empower parishes and worshipping communities to discern how they are to be God's people in their own very different local contexts and as part of one diocesan family.
- Underpinning our approach is an invitation to a way of being articulated by shared diocesan values which might shape how we travel together, support each other and provide mutual accountability.

Since I became Bishop of Chelmsford, I have witnessed people's great warmth and I have seen first-hand, the wonderful things going on in our parishes. 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

Find out more about our Diocesan Direction of Travel and Values:



www.chelmsford.anglican.org/travelling-well-together

THE DEANERY OF WITHAM – Revd Simon Garwood, Area Dean



Witham Deanery is a mainly rural area of mid-Essex, stretching some 25 miles west to east and 15 miles north to south, and comprising 32 parishes (34 churches, plus two that are closed), plus a small pioneer church community in Witham.

We are a diverse mix of town, rural and coastal parishes, and are something of an ‘in-between’ deanery, focused on the A12 corridor, with an attractive but quite sparsely populated stretch of coast south of Colchester between the Colne and Blackwater estuaries, including the settled but diverse island community of Mersea. Adjacent to three more clearly unified deaneries – Braintree (to the north), Chelmsford (to the south-west) and Colchester (north-east), we also comprise parts of three local authorities - Braintree, Colchester and Maldon.

Yet the diversity of our deanery is part of the attraction: we have areas of great natural beauty, picturesque villages and many fine historic churches, as well as the delights of the Blackwater estuary. Mersea is a popular holiday destination, and the large village of Tiptree (approx. 15,000, and growing) is home to the famous Wilkin’s “Tiptree Jam” Factory with its tearoom and strawberry fields. Our deanery is also the origin of the “D’Arcy Spice” apple variety (from Tolleshunt D’Arcy). Aside from the town of Witham itself, the two main urban areas are Tiptree and West Mersea. There is considerable development in the more urban areas of the deanery, mostly outlying private housing estates of varying sizes. Witham, Tiptree, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon and Feering are being particularly affected by the continuing pressure from central government for new housing developments throughout the southeast/London orbital area.

The rapidly expanding town of Witham has considerably the largest population in the Deanery: 25,500 at the 2011 Census, it is at least 30,000 now and will be close to 40,000 by 2030. The Chipping Hill area at the north end dates from prehistoric and Saxon times; the town centre developed from the 12th Century, and in the 18th Century became a key staging-post on the London-Ipswich road. The town expanded rapidly in the 1960s-70s, with several housing estates on the outskirts through a re-housing programme with the Greater London Council. Significant additional housing estates (largely private) and some retail developments are currently being built around the edge of the town, mainly in the south-west but also the north-east, with at least 2,000 new homes, and more to come. Economically, Witham is mixed: some areas are fairly affluent, but there are substantial pockets of deprivation in the older ‘London overspill’ estates.

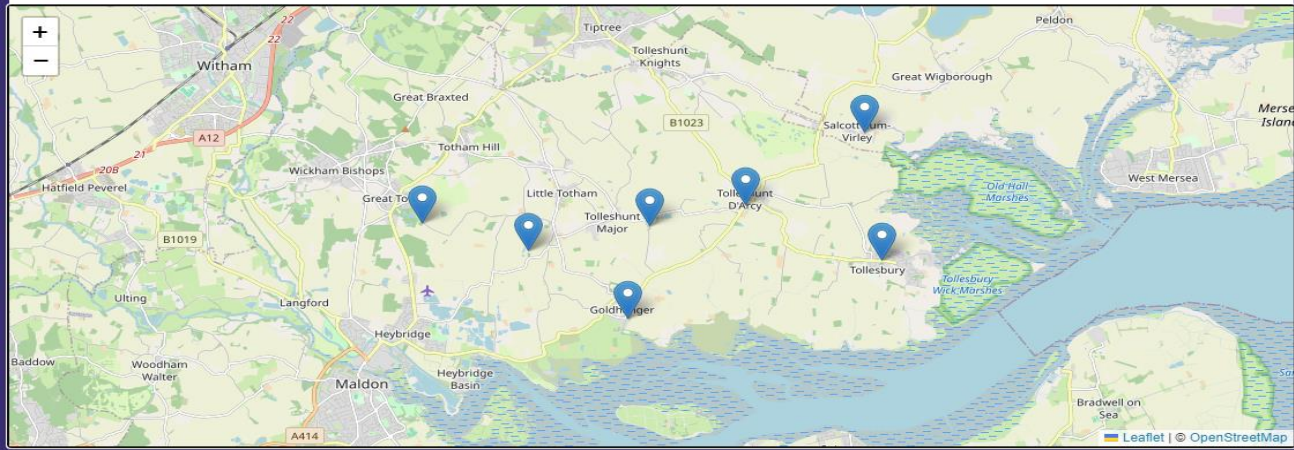
The deanery currently has two team ministries: Witham and Villages, and Thurstable and Winstree (which is Tiptree and its nearby villages). We are moving towards the creation of three Mission and Ministry Units: two of the three are in existence (Thurstable and Winstree with Kelvedon and Feering MMU and Witham and Villages with Hatfield Peverel and Ulting MMU). Witham Deanery like many deaneries in the diocese is in the process of reassessing its MMU structure, and we have also now reached our figure of 9 stipendiary posts (or equivalent in part-time posts). There are several actively retired clergy in the deanery, and currently 8 in SSM posts.

Deanery Synod meets three times each year and is well attended. There is good support and fellowship between the clergy and licensed lay ministers in the deanery, who meet monthly in a Chapter in different churches and vicarages. A new feature this year was a Chapter Quiet Day which we plan to repeat, and we hope to restart deanery acts of worship, so the many congregations of this diverse deanery can meet and worship together.

The Blackwater Benefice

Our churches

Map List



We started life as a Benefice when the previous incumbent joined in April 2020, shortly after the start of the Covid19 Pandemic, so coming together as a united Benefice understandably got off to a challenging start. It has taken some time to evolve to where we are today and it is still a “work in progress”. All seven parishes are working towards being a united Benefice where the churches and congregations work together, support one another, and equip God’s people with everything we need to serve Him and our communities. Our previous incumbent moved on after four years with us to be closer to her wider family.

We have three Associate Priests and two Licensed Lay Ministers who share the worship responsibilities across all seven parishes. There are also three Authorised Lay Preachers (ALP) and one Ordinand. Historically, there is a good record of Ordinands, Lay Ministers and ALPs being trained within the Benefice.

On fifth Sundays we hold a Benefice Service followed by refreshments in one of our churches, on a rotational basis. There is generally attendance from every parish and we are also developing a Benefice Choir to lead the music for these services, offering anthems, devotional chorales and leading the congregational singing.

We support and promote each parish’s social and fundraising activities throughout the Benefice. Publicity for such events is enabled via “A Church Near You” (ACNY) pages, Facebook (each church has their own FB page), newsheets, and parish magazines. We also have a weekly Benefice Newsletter, which includes key contact information, service details, the Gospel reading, a short reflection, as well as any notices of church events around the Benefice.

There is a Benefice calendar, managed by the Administrator and the Incumbent, and accessible by the ministry team and Churchwardens.

The Churchwardens, PCC treasurers and secretaries keep in touch to support each other, share ideas and help with problem solving. Each parish makes a monthly financial contribution which funds ministry team expenses and Benefice Administrator, and it is hoped that both these initiatives will continue in the future.

We held a successful and constructive Benefice “Study Day” in October 2022, sharing ideas, strengths and vision for the future.

Parish Nursing Ministry



In the four North Blackwater parishes of our Blackwater Benefice (Tolleshunt Major, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Tollesbury and Salcott-cum-Virley), we have an established Parish Nursing Service, offering mental health support and spiritual care to those of all faiths and none. The Parish Nurse/PN Service Lead and the four Parish Nurse Assistants willingly (as part of their ministry) work

as unpaid volunteers. One of our local members (a qualified nurse and health visitor) trained as a Parish Nurse and commenced in post following her Affirmation service held in the Church and led by Bishop Roger in 2019. She is a member of the ministry team and has four Parish Nurse Assistants. The Service is governed by all four parishes via a steering group. The vision from this team is to extend provision to all seven parishes within five years, but we still have a way to go to achieve that.

Benefice Administrator

We have been fortunate enough to be able to finance a Benefice Administrator for the last three years. This role has evolved and become a real asset to the life of the Blackwater Benefice and a position we would wish to maintain. The current Administrator works 8 hours per week from her home on a freelance, rather than an employed, basis. She doesn't live or worship regularly in the Benefice but generally attends Benefice Services and other events from time to time. Administrator responsibilities are as follows:

- Supports the incumbent and ministry team
- First point of contact for all general enquiries via email and phone
- Initial contact for bookings and responsible for all administration for weddings and baptisms
- Coordinates the monthly worship rota together with the incumbent, finding preachers and lay leaders as required (including arranging cover during the vacancy)
- Keeps the Benefice Calendar up to date with events / services across the Benefice
- Maintains ACNY pages and Facebook with flyers and event information
- Creates flyers for events / special services as required
- Works with the PSOs to maintain safeguarding and DBS records for the Benefice
- DBS Administrator for Goldhanger & Tolleshunt D'Arcy

We are an assemblage of rural parishes with little viable public transport between them however, we aspire to work considerably as one body wherever possible and appropriate. There is a desire within some of our parishes that we explore joint events such as walks between the churches, Benefice Art weekend, musical events, and more combined services. There is some way to go, but if all the parishes were in favour, this could be another step towards bringing the Benefice together as it moves forward in stewardship, fellowship, evangelism, and outreach.

Pattern of Services (before previous incumbent left)

	1 st Sunday	2 nd Sunday	3 rd Sunday	4 th Sunday
Goldhanger	9.30 Communion PTO	10.00 Lay Led Family Service	9.30 BCP Communion SSM	9.30 Communion Rector
Gt Totham	10.00 Service of the Word Reader	10.00 Lay Led Service of the Word	10.00 Communion Rector	10.00 Communion PTO
Lt Totham	11.00 Communion or Morning Prayer SSM or Reader	11.00 Communion PTO	11.00 Lay Led Family Service	11.00 Communion Rector
Salcott	11.30 Communion SSM	No Service	11.30 Communion SSM/Rector	No Service
Tollesbury	9.30 Communion SSM	9.00 Communion Rector	9.30 Morning Prayer Reader 9am Messy Church with Breakfast at Congregational Church	9.30 Family Communion SSM
Tolleshunt D'Arcy	8am BCP Communion Rector or SSM	11.00 Communion with Sunday Club Rector	No Service	11.00 Communion SSM
Tolleshunt Major	10.00 Café Church with Communion Rector	No Service	9.30 Communion or Morning Prayer SSM or Reader	No Service

Fifth Sundays: A United Benefice Service followed by refreshments, alternating between parishes with priests taking it in turns to lead – sometimes with sermon delivered by Reader or lay preacher.

Weekly non-Sunday services

Every Tuesday at 9.15am Morning Prayer at Tollesbury (led by Reader)

Every Wednesday at 10:00am BCP Communion at D'Arcy (led by Rector)

Every Saturday at 5:30pm BCP Communion at Little Totham (led by PTO)

One of our SSMs is generally away for approx. 6 months of the year, including from May to August inclusive.



Our ministry team

Role description and Person specification

We would like a Rector who:

- Is excited by the prospect of ministering across 7 diverse parishes and who is passionate about and has an understanding of rural, multi-parish ministry
- Will invigorate growth across the Benefice, spiritually and numerically, particularly amongst families and young people
- Will help us retain our individuality as churches while supporting us in sharing resources and providing each other with mutual support
- Can offer a significant ministry of presence in each place
- Will be able to engage and interact with people from all walks of life, whether in church, down the pub or in school
- Will be sustained by a prayerful life and resourced to help us deepen our faith
- Will minister with flexibility and sensitivity across our distinctive worshipping communities and has the resilience and energy to manage expectations across the benefice
- Will lead, enable, nurture and encourage others in their discipleship, vocations and ministries, valuing the gifts, energy and experience that we offer
- Will be a servant-leader, ready to join in with our ministry and work alongside us, who wants to work with us in collaboration and partnership

We can offer our new Rector:

- A warm welcome, support, friendship and prayer
- Significant active support in our churches from both lay and ordained
- Active and engaged PCCs (and some of our meetings are fun too!)
- A willingness to be flexible and to have our expectations challenged
- Mentoring and coaching support via our Area Team as well as regular Ministerial Development Reviews
- An Administrator who works two mornings per week, giving full support to our Rector

Priorities and challenges for our benefice:

- To maintain and develop meaningful connections with our communities
- To sustain our diverse worshipping life and be challenged to grow and change
- To establish a Pastoral Care Team across our parishes so we can respond to need by listening, loving and caring
- To help people to make connections between faith and life, particularly those new to faith, returning to faith or on the fringes of church life
- Decisions that the Church Commissioners make about allocation of funds do not always land well in our rural parishes, particularly when set against the financial challenges that people and churches face. An example of this is the £100 million that the Church Commissioners have allocated as recompense in response to the discovery that the Church Commissioners' predecessor fund had links with transatlantic chattel slavery.

ST. PETER'S GOLDHANGER

Goldhanger is a lively place. Apart from its walks, there is a playing field with children's play area, a refurbished and busy village hall, an active sailing club, a day care nursery, two excellent pubs, and of course St Peter's Church, which has a pastoral role in the community and runs a full programme of events and services throughout the year.



St Peter's Goldhanger:

The building: Grade I listed, the building originates from the 12th century.

Fabric: The church is in a reasonable state of repair. We recently added a modest extension to the church, which provides toilet facilities, a kitchen and meeting room. A sound system was installed in 2017.

The quinquennial inspection highlighted the need to rewire the building, which we hope to do soon. We have a peal of eight bells with an enthusiastic team of ringers.

Churchyard: The churchyard is well maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers.

Financial: We run a Stewardship system, a Gift Aid Envelopes scheme. and an active fundraising programme. Sadly, with the continuing rise in costs, most notably energy, our finances are stretched and, at present, we are unable to meet in full our Parish Share.

Education: Our village school is Tolleshunt D'Arcy Primary Academy (Saint Nicholas School). Mrs Emily Selfe is the church appointed governor.

Style of Worship:

St. Peter's is central church. Vestments are traditionally worn. The Parish has a complete sets of vestments (Latin style) in White, Red, Green, Purple and Blue. The Blessed Sacrament is perpetually reserved. Candles and bells are used in worship and parts of the Parish Communion Service are sung. Children are encouraged to take part in services. We are the only church in the village, and we welcome members of other denominations to worship with us.

Services: We are fortunate to have some locally deployed ministers, licensed as associate priests to the seven parishes of the benefice.

In addition to our Sunday services, we observe other holy days such as Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi and All Souls' Day (some as Benefice services)

Attendance at Christmas services in 2023 was 184 adults, 57 children plus 52 at the Carol Service.

St. Peter's Goldhanger hosts a joint service with the Tothams to mark Sea Sunday at Goldhanger Sailing Club. We actively participate in Benefice services.

Lay Participation: The parish formed a Ministry as Partnership team a few years ago. This has proved very beneficial and enabled much greater lay participation, although with the current requirements of safeguarding training, our team is diminished in numbers. Members regularly lead services and give addresses. Two of the team are Lay Ministers of communion; three are authorised local preachers and have completed the College of Preachers course.

Music: Music is important in our worship. Our main musical instrument is a two manual Nicholson and Lord pipe organ (restored in 2023). Jointly with Little Totham we have formed a choir which practices weekly, sings at weddings and special services and organises occasional evensong services. The choir also combines with other benefice parishes to form a benefice choir for benefice services. The choir combines with the choir of St Luke's, Tiptree for weddings in the Tiptree area.

Community service:

Parish Magazine: We contribute articles and service details to the monthly Parish Magazine.

Goldhanger is a very active village with many different clubs and organisations. Church members are active in most of them. Our pattern of church services, our involvement in other village organisations, and the fundraising and social events we organise, means that we believe we reach most households in the village.

Church activities:

A weekly social coffee morning is very popular and although not seen as a fundraising event does contribute to church finances.

During the summer months the church runs Table-Top Sales with Tea and Cakes. In October our Harvest Supper raised £500. Both are valuable social events in addition to being financially successful. Other social events include Chinese New Year feast evenings.

The Goldhanger Gala weekend is a time when many of the village organisations come together in a combined event. Activities centre on the Village Hall, the Square and the Church. The churchyard has teas served by the church, karate demonstrations and table top sales. Sunday service is moved outside and includes the very popular Teddy Bear Parachute drop.

Every second year we hold a Christmas Tree Festival but this year we took part in the Great Goldhanger Advent Window trail in the Village Hall which proved to be a very successful community event.



<http://www.churchside1.plus.com/Goldhanger-past>

We make a point of saying thank you to all who contribute to church life. We hold a meal for “The Mowers” to thank them for their hard work in keeping the Church yard neat and tidy while also encouraging biodiversity.

We have occasional themed services, for example a Bell Ringers’ service to express our appreciation for all that they do.

We coordinate Lent Lunches while raising funds for Christian Aid.

The village concert is held in the Church in December.

We organise the biennial Village Open Gardens weekend. It has become apparent recently that for many residents in the village, the church is irrelevant however we are heartened by the recent attendance at our Christmas services.

ST. PETER'S GREAT TOTHAM

Great Totham is a friendly village with a vicarage, primary school, alms houses, pubs, post office and store, a thriving garage, Golf course and easy access to main bus routes and main line station. The Parish has a population of about 3750.



St. Peter's is a beautiful, stone-built, 13thC building

Worship:

- 2 services are held at each Sunday; 10.00 am which includes Sunday Club and an evensong at 6.00pm via Zoom
- Tea & coffee are served in the church extension after the 10.00 am service.
- Edward Bear Club (for carers, babies & toddlers) every Thursday morning.
- St Peter's did have a very active Ministry as Partnership team who used to regularly preach and hold services. However, due to safeguarding training/requirements most feel uncomfortable leading services.
- St Peter's Church, Gt Totham and St Bartholomew's Wickham Bishops used to be welcomed into Gt. Totham Primary School to hold "Open the Book" assemblies. We are now struggling to encourage the school to welcome any church members in.
- Baptisms, Weddings & Funerals are held at St Peter's plus many various seasonal services.
- Mothers' Union hold monthly meetings and members attend MU Deanery meetings.
- Special Services are held at New Year, Easter, Mothering Sunday, Harvest and Christmas including a nativity service, two Christingle services and midnight communion.
- Benefice services are held between the 7 parishes when a month has a 5th Sunday.



Spirituality and Nurture:

- A Bible Study Group every Wednesday morning.
- A weekly Sunday Club and yearly Confirmation Groups for young people (& adults)
- Each year St Peter's holds a Lent Discussion Group
- St Peter's, with the support of Great Totham Community Choir, holds Nine Lessons & Carols each year.
- The C of E Children's Society is supported by two well attended Christingle services.



Evangelism and Outreach in the Church, Church Extension and the Honywood:

- A weekly Knit & Natter group brings in members from the local community.
- St Peter's Tower Bell Ringers ring before 10 am service each week plus weddings and funerals.
- Beacon Hill Rainbows meet regularly.
- Monthly Saturday Coffee Morning attracts wide support within the community.
- Flower Festivals, summer event and Christmas Fayres are held annually.
- Regular visits are made to the housebound and Holy Communion is offered where appropriate.
- The Parish Magazine reaches everyone in the village for church activities and village organisations.
- St. Peter's supports the annual 'Friends of Essex Churches' Ride & Stride event.
- Shoe boxes are filled each year by individuals and given via the Rotary Club to Samaritans-Purse.
- Church activities are enthusiastically supported by the wider community.
- A Friends of St Peter's group supports the historic importance of the church.
- Deanery Synod meetings are regularly attended by one or both of our Deanery Synod Reps.
- Parish Share is currently being paid in full.

Our PCC meets approximately 6 times a year and is made up of 11 members. plus a Churchwarden, an Assistant Churchwarden, and Secretary. The Treasurer's job is currently shared. The Editor of the Parish Magazine is a PCC member who leads a separate committee to produce the monthly magazine. We currently do not have a regular organist so use CDs most weeks. Sunday Club leaders hold Sunday Club every week during the service.

St Peter's Church has had a strong link with Bragernes Kirke in Drammen, Norway for the past 20 years. Their choir, church members and clergy from Bragernes have visited St Peter's Church on various occasions and members and clergy of St Peter's have visited Bragernes Kirke – in fact a very enjoyable visit was made by 9 members of our Church last year and we took part in their Sunday service.



Photos – our recent trip to Drammen, Norway and Bragernes Kirke, Drammen

There is much more that St Peter's in Great Totham would love to be doing with the many new young families moving into the village and with the established people now many of whom are retired. There is lots of scope for someone with the enthusiasm to develop many areas without having to worry about the upkeep of the fabric but who would look forward to becoming involved with the organisation of regular services and existing activities to expand and widen the inclusion of new and invigorating ideas.

St Peter's Church runs its own Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/StPetersChurchGreatTotham/>

ALL SAINTS' LITTLE TOTHAM

Our Vision and the Way Forward:

- The vision of this small rural parish – population around 360 – is to work as a living demonstration of God's love within the local community and to encourage those in our Parish and also the wider world to use and enjoy our historic Church.
- We will look for a person who will support us both in our own spirituality and in the pattern of our services and the life of the Church.
- We also seek a person who will be a visible presence in our community and who will want to support us in maintaining and developing the strength of our relationship with our broader community and fellow Benefice churches.
- We receive substantial support from churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike, and from the Swan Public House with whom we have a very successful working relationship.
- It is largely through the generosity and the fundraising of villagers and of the Swan that we keep afloat financially.
- We have an ongoing project which includes a scheme that will allow us to ring our bells again. The support of our parishioners has already resulted in substantial contributions towards the cost of that.
- As with many Parishes our congregations are largely older people, but because of our constant contact with the wider parish we are able at least to keep in touch with younger people.
- We very much hope that a new Priest will lead and guide in finding ways of being more attractive to younger people in our Church life.



Life in the Church:

- A priest led BCP Said Eucharist, every Saturday, 5.30pm; A Priest led Parish Communion, 11am on Sunday mornings two or three times per month; A Lay-led service of Morning Prayer at 11am on Sundays when a Priest is not available.
- Occasional Special Sunday Services: Not the same every year, and a mixture of Priest and Lay led. Invitations to attend sent out. Examples:
- A Civic Service to which our MP and members of the various local authorities are invited.
- A Churchyard Service to which every known family with a grave or cremated remains is invited.
- A Marriage Service to which those who have been married at All Saints are invited. Similarly a Baptism Service.
- A Friendship Service for those who support the Church but are only occasional attenders.
- A Dog Service.

Events in the Parish:

Every year All Saints benefits financially from three social events in the village, all of which attract a large number of visitors, both locally and from around the county. These events provide us with a large percentage of our annual income.

* The Village Fete: This is organised by a committee formed by representatives of the Swan, All Saints and other villagers. Members of the Church help to man the stalls and sideshows.

* Classic Vehicles: A villager organises this event every year on behalf of All Saints. Usually there are more than 100 show vehicles, a mixture of bikes, scooters and cars ranging from the 1920s to the 1990s.

* Flowers and gardens: A villager organises an open gardens weekend on behalf of All Saints, and All Saints opens its doors with lunches, displays and stalls.

At each of these events members of All Saints are present, both helping and supporting. We show a high profile, and we hope our new priest will make themselves known to those who give us so much support.



Four-legged friends among the regulars at last year's Dog Service



Enjoying an All Saints' Parish Supper

The Things We Get Up To At All Saints:

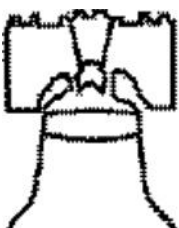
Most importantly we keep the whole parish informed about what is going on at All Saints and in Little Totham generally by publishing a monthly Newsletter. This is sponsored and financially supported by the Swan, and is distributed to every house in the village by volunteer Church members and villagers. The information is gathered and edited by members of All Saints' congregation.

Other Activities:

Three times a year – usually Harvest Festival, Christmas and Shrove Tuesday – All Saints organises Parish Suppers at the Swan for both churchgoers and non-churchgoers.

- Twice a year, Parish Lunches are held at the Church, with an array of stalls of various kinds for visitors to browse.
- Musical entertainments are held at the Church whenever possible.
- Our friends at the Little Totham Evangelical Church visit All Saints to share the Palm Sunday Service.
- All Saints and the Parish Council share leading the annual Remembrance Service at the village Memorial.

Hoping The Bells Will Ring Again:



We are currently working on a project of repair to our West Door which will include a scheme that will allow us to ring bells again. A fund has been established and we are now seeking grants for this project. Thanks to the generosity of people in our parish we already have contributions towards this project.

ST MARY THE VIRGIN SALCOTT CUM VIRLEY

The ancient parishes of Salcott and Virley were amalgamated in 1884, after the Essex earthquake of 1884.

The Grade II* Listed church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, is in the centre of the village and dates from the 13th century. Although the main building was damaged by the Essex earthquake, the flint tower remained intact; the nave was extensively restored and the chancel rebuilt. It has been well maintained over the years. The church is valued locally for its peaceful and simple interior and for the well-kept appearance of its churchyard.

The PCC go to considerable lengths to ensure that the church is open seven days a week during daylight hours, and a coffee point has been established for the benefit of congregation, walkers and casual visitors.

A project is underway to add a toilet, a small meeting room and kitchen facilities. This will open out the possibilities for the church to develop its role in giving heart to our small village community and strengthen the relationship between church and village. We view the popular Tollesbury and Salcott Parish Magazine as a valuable communication tool between church and community.

Salcott cum Virley Village:

The village consists principally of a main street, The Street (Salcott) and Mill Lane (Virley), a turning off the B1026 running between Maldon, Mersea, and Colchester.

Village amenities:

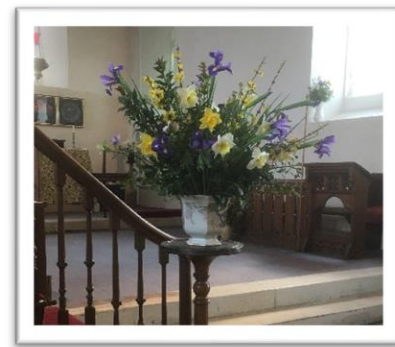
The village has no local shops or pub and relies on volunteers to create places where residents can meet. The village hall is leased by the diocese to an independent charity, having been converted from the old school. It hosts a playgroup, clubs for children aged 7 years and over, an art group and parish council meetings; and it is also a venue for the monthly parish Sunday Lunch and the coffee mornings run by the Friends of St Mary's. It is a welcome and valued place for parties, meetings and other local events.

The nearest service providers are based in Tollesbury, Tiptree, Maldon, and Colchester; they can be reached by bus from the nearby B1026 crossroads; all have a variety of shops and services including cultural, social and sporting facilities.

There are excellent train services to London from nearby Witham, taking 45-50 minutes.

Facts and Figures:

The population is currently around 400 but may increase slightly due to planned or opportunistic development within the wider area.



Above: Some of the local community, alongside our Flower Ladies, keep our church looking beautiful, well used and loved...

Below: Our coffee point provides an area to meet up and chat.



Above: A Parish Lunch is held after the service each 3rd Sunday of the month.

Local area: Business and leisure:

Farming is the primary industry within the area, although there are also hotels and sports centres. Commuting to Colchester and London is also common. The village is close to a number of wildlife reserves owned by the Essex Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and the RSPB. Walkers and birdwatchers are increasingly present as visitors. The area is extremely popular for sailing and other water sports, including fishing.

Activities:

St. Mary's has been developing activities to draw the local community into the church and parish life including fundraising and social events. Further activity development is hampered by the need for the toilet facilities, mentioned above.

Parish life:

The PCC meets every 2 months; the day-to-day oversight of the parish is by the PCC standing committee. PCC members take responsibility for fundraising, cleaning, garden and building maintenance. Individual parishioners also provide a constant supply of flower arrangements in the church. The PCC pays for the organist, the grass cutting contractor and any other casual work as required. The greatest charge on general funds is the parish share which we, sadly, have struggled to pay in recent years. Church finances are constantly under review, the treasurer ensuring that VAT and gift aid donations are reclaimed on a regular basis. A small group, the Friends of St Mary's, runs monthly coffee mornings, the funds from which are directed to the costs of the planned toilet. There is also an annual Christmas Tree Festival.

Church Attendance:

There are currently just over 20 people on the Electoral Roll. The regular sung Eucharist (CW) at 11.30am is attended by 20 people, but this is increased for Festivals and the Carol Service. A series of "Fourth Sunday Specials" held at 3.00p.m. has included Pet Services, Remembrance Services, Harvest celebrations and Songs of Praise events. We are about to recommence services where we are joined by a local choral group. Pre Covid, 'OddSong' had joined us for Matins on the fourth Sunday, and we are endeavouring to increase attendance by including them in a more informal style of worship.

Children's Ministry and Schools:

There are around 25 primary school aged children in the village, attending Birch Church of England (Aided) Primary School, 4 miles away. The parish is eager to sustain and develop contact with the school and, to this end, meetings have taken place with the head teacher. Our non-stipendiary minister, Revd Andrew Vince, is now on the Board of Governors, and he will undertake some school assemblies as well. It is hoped that this contact will enable the growth of a more active children's ministry and attendance.



We are extremely proud of our "Days of Creation" reredos, worked for us by Christine Daly, our late Churchwarden. It was dedicated in March 2019 by Bishop Roger – who also cut the celebration cake



The Christmas Bazaar, and the "Tree Spree" 2023...



Local secondary provision is at Thurstable school in Tiptree 4 ½ miles away. There is a school bus service. The school is well regarded and has a good academic record. The area is also served by grammar schools in Colchester.

Children are particularly encouraged to join us at Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday and Christmas Services. The annual Christmas Eve service, “Instant Nativity – Just Add Children” is particularly well attended. The informal seating and reading areas at the tower end of the church are available to both young and old. All are encouraged to use it and make use of the well-established coffee point.

The Future:

It is the view of St Mary’s PCC that the church has a great potential to offer the village. The lack of any local facilities other than the Village Hall means that there is a need for a venue in which people may meet and share the good and the bad of their day-today lives. Plans for an amenities annexe and toilet are moving forward – our “2020 Vision”.

The location of St. Mary’s, on the edge of the Blackwater estuary and salt marshes with excellent access to the sea wall and wildlife reserves, encourages us to hope that we may, once toilet facilities are complete, use the building for quiet days and meditative services alongside our normal timetable.



Above: Pet Service 2023

Below: Across the marshes from the top of the church tower



ST MARY THE VIRGIN TOLLESBURY

Tollesbury is the second largest village in the Blackwater Benefice. Tollesbury has a mix of population – families and very active retired people. Tollesbury nestles on the north shore of the river Blackwater estuary. It is a self-sufficient community supporting several local shops. This village is a special place with a big heart.

Church:

Our church lies in the square at the heart of the village. It is a well-maintained Grade II* listed building dating from the 11th Century and is open daily.

The vestry has been recently refurbished and accommodates a toilet, sink and refreshment area as well as storage and workspace. The nave seats around 120 people comfortably and benefits from modern heating. The pipe organ is regularly tuned and serviced. We are fortunate to have an organist on the first, second and fourth Sunday of each month.

The bell tower houses, reputedly, the second lightest set of 10 bells in the country which have recently been fully refurbished. The bells are rung for Sunday services.

We have a well-kept churchyard which is open for burials. We have a complete, detailed Churchyard Plan showing all graves in the churchyard including the area for war graves and the cremated remains.

Our Worship:

Please see earlier page detailing all the services offered in the Blackwater Benefice.

Monday: during term time: Edward Bear Club

Tuesday: Morning Prayer Group

1st Wednesday in the month: Mothers Union Group (in the Tower)

Parish Life:

The PCC is very active in the life of the church but in recent years we have struggled to encourage a full PCC membership, those who are members are very willing to partake in the running of the church or fundraising. Currently we have a vacancy for a churchwarden. We have an active fundraising group ensuring we meet our financial obligations annually including payment in full of our Parish Share; further to this the parish church has been supported for many years by a well-established Friends group, raising to date £71,000 to maintain the fabric of the church. Advertising space and the cover cost of our Parish Magazine also produces a sizeable income.

The Parish Rooms, owned by St Mary's, are used regularly for both church and village activities.

Working With Fellow Christians:

We have a good relationship with the Congregational Church in the village, joining together for joint services. Together we run 'Fizzers' a thriving after school Christian club for years 1-6 currently, in the school hall, a lively monthly Messy Church and when possible, a Holiday club. St Mary's, the Congregational and the smaller Roman Catholic communities share the hosting of several services throughout the year which are usually well attended.

Moored in the Blackwater at Tollesbury is the FACT Lightship. Although FACT is not associated with the Blackwater Benefice you may wish to see what it has to offer. <https://www.fact.org.uk>.

School:

Although not a church school, Tollesbury School has started to forge great links with St. Mary's, having invited a member of the Ministry Team to lead monthly assembly although at present these are not happening due to a restructuring of the school day. The school uses the church for 4 services during the year – Harvest, Christmas, Easter and Remembrance Day.

Challenges We Face as a Parish:

- To grow our church
- To further bind us together as an enlarged benefice
- To increase the number of children and young adults in our church family
- To make Christ more visible in Tollesbury
- To develop a pastoral care team
- To make our Rector more visible in the village

The members of St. Mary's and the Christians in Tollesbury are longing for a new Rector to lead us in the next chapter of God's work here.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF EVENTS AND SERVICES RELATING TO ST. MARY THE VIRGIN TOLLESBURY**Edward Bear 30th Birthday****Christingle Service**

Messy Church which is held in the Congregational Church



Photos of the two outdoor services which are held each year and for these services we are joined by our local Congregational Church.

Pentecost Service

Sea Sunday Service

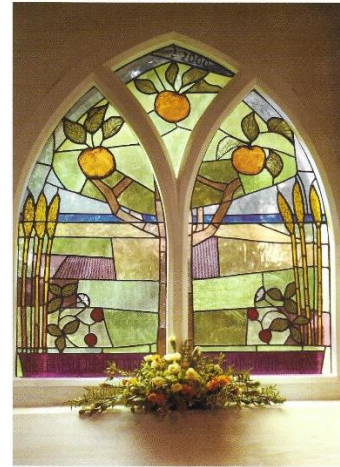
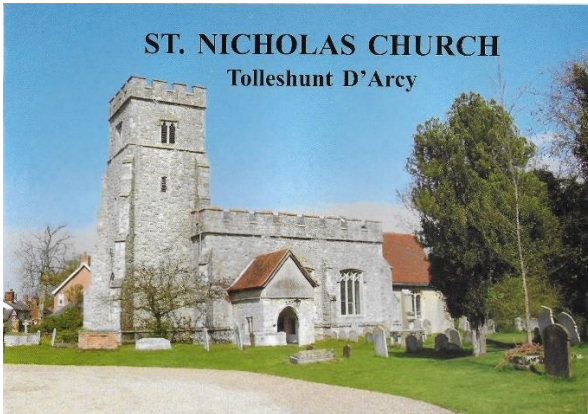


Christmas Bazaar, one of our fundraising activities



ST. NICHOLAS' TOLLESHUNT D'ARCY

Home of the D'Arcy Spice apple.



The Millennium Window

About the Parish:

Tolleshunt D'Arcy is a pretty village at the junction of roads from Colchester, Maldon and traffic coming from the A12 via Tiptree. At the heart of the village is the Church, Queen's Head pub (recently reopened under a change of management) and the shop, all within the Conservation Area. Other facilities are the Village Hall, which contains a part time Post Office, a large Recreation Ground and there is a popular Indian Restaurant and Take-away. Three regular bus services operate from Tollesbury through the village to Maldon, Colchester and Tiptree and on to Witham. The Parish stretches from the outskirts of Tiptree down to the Blackwater Estuary. There are about 450 houses and a few flats, some of which are Social Housing. Some of the Farmhouses are very remote. The population is approximately 1200 inhabitants, who span the age range.

The Church and its People:

St Nicholas' Church, is situated prominently within the Village and has a car park beside the road. In the Church there is a toilet, Coffee & Tea making area and there is a side Chapel behind a glazed arch. Currently we have Services regularly on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, using the Common Worship book. On the second Sundays we have Family Communion and the fourth Parish Communion. A fledgling Children's Club has been established to coincide with the Second Sunday, taking place in the side Chapel. Unfortunately, it has not been well attended so far, but we keep on trying. Until recently we have had an 8am Service of Holy Communion (BCP) on the first Sunday of the month, which we would like to restart. We also have a regular Wednesday 10am Holy Communion (BCP) in the side Chapel.

We have a very fine organ and we enjoy singing traditional and modern hymns from the Hymns Old & New Book. We do struggle to attract young people and we pray that the social and educational efforts we have made and continue to make will eventually bear fruit. We greatly appreciate our current Benefice Team, who support our work with such enthusiasm and dedication. Some of our electoral roll members and regular congregation live outside the village. In recent years our Parish Share has always been paid in full but fluctuating calculations of the amount required by the Diocese make our Treasurer unwilling to forecast any future guarantee. In recent years our Accounts show a modest annual surplus. We have excellent support from volunteer teams for Flower arranging and cleaning. The Churchyard and Extension are currently maintained by the Probation Service using teams of offenders given 'hours in the Community'.

The Church and the Community:

St Nicholas VA primary School, which is a member of a Multi Academy Trust status has 80 to 100 pupils and serves the village and surrounding area. Its instrument of Governance allows for the Incumbent to be a member of the Board of School Governors, additionally there is a PCC representative. We try to have the children participate in their own arranged Services twice per term in the Church and there is a weekly assembly in the School, led by a member of the Ministry team. Additionally, the PCC has a team of volunteers who attend the School weekly and help children with their reading. Our fundraising events are designed to benefit and build bridges with the social life of the Village. Regular events are a Strawberry Tea in June, with live music and a Fête in early September. Both of these take place in the rear garden of Church House (by kind permission) and are accessed through the Churchyard. We have a Christmas Concert in the Church and Village Carol singing at the pub. As part of our mission to tackle social exclusion and loneliness we have been running a monthly Coffee morning and a Parish lunch at the pub. We hope to restart these once the pub reopens.

The condition and development of the Church building:

St Nicholas is Grade I listed, built 1380-1420 and the latest Quinquennial Report shows that it is generally in good condition. The Architect wanted to see the Chancel roof tiles rehung before his next inspection and we have this in hand for October 2024. We can pay for this major expense out of our funds but hope to obtain some support. There is a peal of six bells, which are currently out of commission due to a corroded and damaged steel frame. The cost of repairs will be in the £100k+ range and we have so far failed to find enough financing to help with funding.

In 2017 the side Chapel arch was glazed. This provides a soundproofed area for children to play and is available to the School, if needed. It is heated independently from the Church and can be used for PCC and other committee meetings.

The organ was fully refurbished and rebuilt in 2020. Our hope is to grow God's kingdom in Tolleshunt D'Arcy and to make life better for its people through the comfort, which faith brings. We need someone who will lead us by example and help us all to bring the Church into the lives of the local community. We believe that with prayer and effort this can be achieved.



D'Arcy Fete Day

ST. NICHOLAS' TOLLESHUNT MAJOR

Tolleshunt Major is a small rural village with no school, shop or public transport. Our beautiful Grade I listed Church sits on top of a slight hill on the outskirts of the village boundary, with wonderful views looking out towards the Blackwater estuary. St. Nicholas is a 12th century building with 15th and 16th century alterations and additions including a red Tudor brick tower.

The church was for many years a great place for children's work due to the style of worship enjoyed. Sadly, since all children's work was moved to Tollesbury, the congregations of Tolleshunt Major and Tolleshunt D'Arcy, where the majority of the children's work took place, suffered. To address this, Café Church was established 18 months ago with great success, attracting children, young people, and adults of all ages. This informal service is held in St Nicholas Village Hall rather than the church itself (due to the lack of facilities), and to help keep heating costs to a minimum. We have an average of 18 people who come to Café Church (compared to 9 on our service on the 3rd Sunday). Our annual Christmas Eve Christingle service attracted 45 people in 2023.



In 2017, following a grant of nearly £450k from the Big Lottery fund the former 'church rooms' were completely renovated and re-opened as a larger community venue with excellent facilities. The hall is located away from the church, at the heart of the community backing onto the village playing field. It can now cater for up to 50 people for a family celebration or party and has a great kitchen as well as a comfortable snug with comfy chairs. At the current time ten regular clubs are run from the hall including art, table tennis, exercise classes and a book club. The Parish Nurse also holds a monthly health and wellbeing clinic here. These opportunities really benefit the community and help reduce loneliness and isolation for those of all ages.

Parish activities:

The biggest community event that is held is the Summer Fair which takes place in May, and funds raised go to the church. Other events include quiz nights, cheese & wine tastings, a MacMillan Cancer cream tea fundraiser, treasure hunt and BBQ.

Parochial Church Council:

The PCC is small and consists of four elected persons. Members of the ministry team are ex officio members, normally at least two of the ministry team and the Parish Safeguarding Officer attend each meeting.

THE VICARAGE



The Vicarage is situated in Tolleshunt D'Arcy. It stands back from the road in Church Street and is surrounded by an attractive garden overlooking open fields but secluded from neighbours. There is an integral double garage and parking for four cars. The house has five bedrooms and was built in 1953 with the garage and fifth bedroom added in 1988. A modern conservatory has been added to the rear of the house and the whole house is in good decorative order.

Parish Share

Parish Share Blackwater Benefice			
	2023 requested	2023 paid	2024 requested
Gt Totham	23026	23026	23848
Tollesbury	19483	19483	19976
Tolleshunt D'Arcy	9274	9274	9509
Goldhanger	9742	6000	10041
Little Totham	9708	6000	10054
Salcott cum Virley	7933	6545	8134
Tolleshunt Major	7394	2580	7658

Congregation numbers and Occasional Offices

	Electoral roll	Average Sunday congregation	Weddings		Baptisms		Funerals/Burials of ashes	
			2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Goldhanger	27	13	1	1	4	4	4	2
Great Totham	53	28 & 6 children	10	3	5	7	15	9
Little Totham	20	17	0	0	3	1	4	7
Salcott	20	20	0	1	0	0	3	1
Tollesbury	63	20	1	2	2	3	3	9
Tolleshunt D'Arcy	18	18	3	2	2	2	3	3
Tolleshunt Major	13	between 10 and 20	0	0	0	1	0	1