



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

St Leonard's Lexden

PARISH PROFILE



<https://www.stleonardslexden.org.uk/>

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Parish Profile

For St Leonards, Lexden

Mission Statement

To be a welcoming inclusive church, promoting social justice and diversity whilst following our Liberal Anglo Catholic traditions.

The Benefice and its context

St Leonard's is situated in Colchester, North East Essex, and we are excited to seek a new Priest-in-Charge. The opportunities we can offer should excite and delight a person motivated by a challenge. We see great opportunities for growing our congregation and extending the word of God throughout our community. If you feel that you are such a person to join us on our journey of spiritual growth, and would like to find out more about us, please refer to our webpage or come and visit us, you will be made most welcome.

The New Priest in Charge

As a Parish, we welcome all applications from someone who feels they could match our expectations. We are praying for:

- A liberal Anglo Catholic priest who will uphold our traditions of worship.
- Will engage with our whole community, across all age groups.
- Build relationship with young families and their children and bring them into the family of God.
- Will bring fresh ideas, helping us to build on what we have achieved and encouraging growth in our congregation.
- Will have strong pastoral skills and a desire to reach out to our wider community.
- Will work with and lead our dedicated Ministry Team.
- Will work to bring in fresh faces to our Sacristy team.
- Embrace our music tradition.
- Will encourage and enable vocations into all kinds of ministry, lay and ordained.
- Will journey with us as we strengthen our relationships with the neighbouring parishes of Shrub End and Stanway.
- Will help us embrace the changes we encounter with confidence, sensitivity and awareness.

What we can offer You

- A faithful and prayerful community that loves to worship and serve God rooted in a liberal Anglo Catholic tradition.
- A strong ministry team of PTO clergy, a lay reader and churchwardens as well as a committed PCC.
- A modern, 4-bedroom Rectory in good condition, with a small garden and separate garage, within easy walking distance of the city centre.
- The support of an experienced Parish Administrator.
- A strong choral tradition.
- Meaningful relationships and connections with our local community.
- A friendly and supportive Deanery team and Chapter.

Our Ministry Team

We are fortunate to have a strong ministry team of three Priests with PTO who are assisted by two other Priests with PTO on an occasional basis, plus a lay Reader with permission to officiate, all of whom are looking forward to welcoming and assisting our new Priest- in -Charge. (L-R)

Revd Jacquie Messinger

Revd Maggie Whiteman

Revd Vivien Mendham



The Rectory

Our Rectory stands about three quarters of a mile from our church and is in good condition. The rectory is a modern building, built during the 1980's and includes 4 bedrooms and two bathrooms. It has a small garden to the rear and front with a separate garage.

It is within easy walking distance of the City Centre and a short car journey to a shopping mall with well-known high-street shops, it is near three local secondary schools, all of which have high academic records.

The A12 is less than a mile away, which provides access to other major cities and towns. Stanstead airport is only 45 minutes away on a good day.

Colchester railway station is within easy reach and travel to London can be achieved in under 50 minutes.



Administration

The Parish is fortunate to have a part time administrator which allowed the previous Priest in charge to administer his spiritual and pastoral duties without the burden of excessive paperwork.

The Administrator assists in providing support for Stewardship, bookkeeping, working with the church magazine editor and helping to provide clerical assistance for fund raising events, they also look after booking the main church meeting room and the hire of the Church Hall as well as being involved in dealing with contractors if the wardens are unavailable.

The administrator was previously a Churchwarden and now also acts as a wardens' assistant.

Our Service Pattern

St Leonards is a traditional church following a liberal Anglo Catholic tradition. Like many churches, following COVID our regular Sunday morning congregation has dropped from around 80 plus to 60 plus. Although over the Christmas period for 2024 our numbers were high with 800+ attending services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

On the first Sunday of each month, we offer All Age Eucharist. On all other Sundays we offer Sung Eucharist at 9.45 am. Twice monthly there is Holy Communion with BCP liturgy at 8.00am and on Sunday evenings once a month Evensong at 5.30pm and a Eucharist for Wholeness and Healing.

During the week we offer Morning Prayer on Monday and Tuesday, Holy Communion followed by coffee at 10am on Wednesdays and Holy Communion at 8.00am on Thursdays.

The 9.45 services are livestreamed.

We have strong choral tradition with the choir being involved in all the major services.



See Addendum A for additional services.

Map of the Parish



Our community

The Parish covers two electoral wards, Prettygate and Lexden, and has approximately 6700 residents according to the information given in the 2025 PCM report.

To many Lexden is known as “leafy Lexden” but in reality, we take in areas that cover the broad spectrum of modern day living including both private and social housing.

The Secondary schools near the Rectory are not in our parish, however we do have two Primary and one junior school in the Parish which are currently looked after by our PTO's. Also, within the parish we also have a Special Needs School (Kingswode Hoe) supported by a PTO. All three schools use our facilities for their Christmas services during the lead up to the Christmas period, with one school having two services due to demand. Our PTOs also conduct assemblies in primary schools.

The Kingswode Hoe school has also used the church for a form of work experience for their students by putting on coffee mornings with members of our congregation supporting.

There are two residential care homes in the parish regularly visited by the Ministry Team, with monthly Holy Communion services and Christmas carol services.

Our Church Building



A church called St. Leonard's has stood on this site since the later 13th century although the present church was built in the early years of the 19th century and its architecture was called by the Victorians as 'English Middle Pointed Gothic'. This church replaced a medieval building that was considered too small and not in keeping with the changing social standing of the area. At the end of the 19th century the Chancel

was extended and a lady chapel added. A further extension was added and the rear nave reordered in 2008 to incorporate level access, office space, meeting rooms, toilets and a small kitchen.

The church has a large historic graveyard that has been closed since the 1970's.

What we offer as a church

The church is very active within the community providing various events, all of these are run by volunteers from within the congregation they include the following:-

Two major events that act as both fund raisers and vehicles for community involvement are our Summer Fete and Christmas Market.



At St Leonard's we love to welcome children, young people and families. Children and young people are a valued and active part of our community, of our worship, and of the church's life. We want families to feel welcomed and comfortable in our church and we have a special area at the back of the church with books and toys for younger children so that they know on entering that there is a place for them at St Leonard's.

We also offer a Toddler Group for mums, dads and carers with pre-school children. This is very successful, it takes place on Wednesday mornings in the Church Hall and encompasses two groups, in term time only.

Also on offer is our 'Brick club'. This takes place during school holidays and is well attended, so much so that on one occasion we had over 100 youngsters and parents attending, again in the church hall.

Six times a year we offer Messy Church which encourages youngsters and parents to join us for an afternoon of fun within the church building. numbers for this are always more than 40, rising to nearly 70 at Christmas and Easter.

We have Junior church twice a month, but attendance has dropped dramatically and is something that needs rebuilding.

(for further details about our work with young people please see Addendum B)



Once a month we run a lunchtime gathering called the Friendship lunch. This is well attended by people within the community. We also hold monthly breakfast meetings for both Men and Women which encourage fellowship within the church, and allow people to be there for one another and to enjoy each other's company.

We have recently started a group called Loose Ends aimed at those that have been bereaved or just want to come in for a chat , this grew out of our Friendship Line which is comprised of a group of parishioners who regularly phone members in the congregation who are housebound, ill or alone.

We have the ability within our congregation to put on various fundraising events, including a Memorial Concert, various quizzes, VE day celebration, and this year we reintroduced a Harvest Supper.



We are actively involved in supporting outside charities, both local and further afield, including MacMillan, Royal Marsden, the Children's Society as well as other charities.

Our Church Hall is used by our youth group Known as St Leonards Youth Club (SLYC), at least 2 Scout groups use our facilities as well as a local yoga group' and a local Choral group.

In the last 3 years we have successfully reintroduced our Parish Magazine, this has been well received, and readership is growing, we are pleased to state that it runs at a profit thanks to the work of the Parish Administrator.

Other outreach includes pastoral visiting of the housebound, gift bags from Junior Church, Christmas hampers for a local mother and baby home, support with members of the choir visiting Warley once a month for morning service, holding a carol service at

the local pub, supporting our adjoining Parish of All Saints with our clergy officiating at services and members of the congregation attending their coffee mornings. One of our priests is chaplain to Colchester Rugby club, one is part of the Ministry Team at St Helena Hospice, and the other is an Area Ordinands' Advisor.

Governance

St Leonard's has two churchwardens with three assistants.



The Parochial Church Council comprises the churchwardens, the secretary, the members of the treasury team, three members of Deanery Synod, the Safeguarding team, elected representatives of the congregation and co-opted clergy.

Safeguarding

We take safeguarding very seriously and have a committed and active Safeguarding team that deliver regular training to the St Leonard's team and other churches.

Finance

The PCC is registered with the Charity Commission as The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Leonard's Lexden – registration number 1128302.

Historically the PCC has been fortunate in having healthy financial resources. It has benefitted from several substantial legacies in recent years which, in turn, have been invested in extensions to the main church building. Annual accounts for 2024 record total income of £154,395 including an insurance claim of £18,955. Regular giving, including stewardship promises, collections at services and tax recovered from gift-aided giving totalled £101,548. Fêtes and general fund-raising totalled £4,338 and letting out the church and church hall generated £7,584. Income generated from PCC investments totalled £13,955.

Total expenditure was £195,763, which included our Parish Share to the Diocese of £100,980. It also included expenditure of £15,698 on improvements to the lighting and other facilities in the Church Hall.

Despite the historically healthy financial balance, regular expenditure has exceeded income for the last five years by an average of £35,000. Throughout this time the Parish Share has been paid in full with some additional contributions to assist neighbouring parishes. The PCC has, however, notified the Deanery that it wishes to cut its contribution in 2026 by 20%.

The planned repairs to the nave roof will deplete the restricted reserves significantly, hopefully mitigated by applications for grant funding, VAT reclaim and contributions from the parish and others.

Conclusion

We thank you for reading our Profile and we hope that our Parish and community at large is something you would like to become involved with. As a church we are praying that God in his wisdom will make you as excited about the future as we are.

If you would like any further information or would like to visit us, please contact The Venerable Ruth Patten, Archdeacon of Colchester on 01376-513130 or a.colchester@chelmsford.anglican.org or Revd Canon Erwin Lammens, Area Dean on 01206-822511 or erwinlammens@btinternet.com.

Addendum A

Additional Services

Holy Week and Easter

Palm Sunday: Procession outside with Palms before Parish Eucharist.

Monday: Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week

Morning: Holy Communion.

Evening: Reflection followed by Compline.

Maundy Thursday:

7:30pm: Eucharist of the last supper with foot washing, Stripping the Altar and procession to the Altar of repose.

Good Friday: 9:00am: Mattins and Litany.

10:00am: All age worship and Procession of the Cross.

12-3pm: The Three Hours Devotion.

Easter Eve: 7:30pm: Easter Vigil and Blessing of the new Fire.

Easter Day: 8:00am: Holy Communion.

9:45am: Blessing of the Easter Garden and Festal Eucharist.

6:30pm: Evensong and Sermon.

Advent and Christmas

Advent 1: 5:30pm: From Darkness to Light (a Candlelight Service.)

Wednesdays during Advent

Evening: Reflection followed by Compline.

Advent 4: 5:30pm: Service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

Christmas Eve 2:30pm: Children's Crib Service.

4:30pm: Service of Light (a candlelight service with Candles).

6:30pm Service of Light (identical to 4.30pm).

11:15pm Blessing of the Crib and Midnight Eucharist.

Christmas Day: 8:00am Holy Communion.

9.45am Parish Eucharist.

Candlemas: Children's Christingle Service in aid of the Children's Society.

Other Special Services

Ash Wednesday

Two services are held at which the imposition of ashes is offered.

Mothering Sunday

Informal Eucharist with blessing and presentation of posies.

Ascension Day

A service is held in the evening.

Harvest Festival

A popular all age service which includes traditional harvest hymns. Gifts brought to the altar are given to the Colchester Food Bank.

Remembrance Sunday

The Parish Eucharist is followed by Church Parade and the Parish act of Remembrance, with the Last Post and the laying of wreaths at the war memorial.

Annual Bereavement Service

At All Souls Tide the Wednesday Eucharist is a Requiem for the departed, with names read out. On Sunday evening there is a special service of remembrance to which families of parishioners whose funerals have taken place in the past year are invited. It is also a service where parishioners can remember family members and friends they have lost.

Messy Church

Held six times a year and is a mix of informal worship and activities for children and their families.

Addendum B

Children and Young People at St Leonard's

At St Leonard's we love to welcome children, young people and families. Children and young people are a valued and active part of our community, of our worship, and of the church's life. We want families to feel welcomed and comfortable in our church and we have a special area at the back of the church with books and toys for younger children so that they know on entering that there is a place for them at St Leonard's.

We run several groups for our younger church members.

Junior Church

This takes place twice a month during the Sunday morning service. The children join the group after The Welcome and rejoin the congregation during the Eucharistic Prayer. We use the Roots programme, focussing on one of the Lectionary readings which we develop creatively through activities, games, and discussions to support the children's spiritual growth and understanding. They enjoy telling the congregation what they have been doing at the end of the service. Currently this group is quite small as most of our core children are moving onto secondary school.

SLYC (St Leonard's Youth Club)

We meet twice a term in the hall on a Sunday afternoon and cater for children in Year 4 and above. We have a growing number of members averaging 10 per session, some of whom already know us from other church activities and some who are new to the St Leonard's family. Our main focus is fun through playing games and having time to talk about things which are important to the group. In the last two years we have raised money for the homeless and the Trussell Trust by holding a Sleep Out in the church.

Messy Church

Messy Church is a well-established informal family worship afternoon, usually taking place six times a year on a Sunday. We share some of the classic Bible stories or themes together through crafts, activities, games, and songs. At the end we share a simple meal together. Messy Church is usually well attended with Messy Pancakes and Messy Christmas attracting large numbers.

Brick Club

Brick Club meets on Tuesday mornings in the hall during the school holidays. This informal Turn up and Build! group gives children and parents the opportunity to get to know us and each other in a relaxed and safe environment. Last Christmas we held a Messy Brick Nativity when Messy Church and Brick Club joined together to celebrate Christmas. It is a popular group, and numbers can be very high.

Baby and Toddler Group

This group meets in the hall on Wednesday mornings in term time. We run two identical hour-long sessions as there are too many children to fit in one group. We usually average a total of 35 children with their parents and carers. This is a really popular group, and we get to know the children and their adults very well. We promote other church activities such as the ones already mentioned. It is pleasing to see these families attending Messy Church, Brick Club, coffee mornings and fêtes etc. They also come to our Christmas Eve Crib service and our special Mothers' Day and Christmas Services which are held specifically for the group.

In addition to these groups Beaver, Cub and Scout groups meet in our hall during the week.

Addendum C

Introducing the Deanery of Colchester

Thank you for your interest in the post of Priest-in-Charge at St Leonard's Lexden in the Deanery of Colchester. This church and the community it serves, plays a significant role in the life of the Deanery. In the following paragraphs we would like to introduce our deanery to you in a nutshell

More info and the latest news is available on our website www.colchesterdeanery.org.uk

The current population of the Deanery is 145,000 and this is set to rise in the next ten years. Plans for a large garden community in the East of the Deanery have been approved and several smaller developments are being planned.

Colchester Deanery counts 31 worshipping communities in 24 Parishes with ministries ranging from the city centre, through urban and suburban settings to rural villages. It also includes a Bishop's Mission Order and Chaplaincies at the General Hospital, Essex University, Colchester Garrison and St Helena Hospice. The Deanery actively supports Christian Youth Outreach - CYO Colchester.

Colchester has a significant variety of educational establishments: Essex University, two colleges, nine secondary schools (including a RC school) and forty primary schools of which ten are CofE Aided or Controlled.

The Deanery is led by a team including the Area Dean, Lay Chair and Assistant Area Dean, in conjunction with the Deanery Standing & Pastoral Committee. For Parish Share and other financial matters churches are offered help and advice from our Deanery Finance Officer. Also, the Episcopal Area and Diocese provide helpful resources. Elected Parish representatives meet three times a year at Deanery Synod. Clergy meet regularly at Chapter. The atmosphere among clergy is amicable.

Many in the Deanery are mission-orientated and focus on outreach and growth. Styles and ethos in the churches are diverse; but respect for each Parish's identity is a priority. Parishes are generally supportive of each other's initiatives.

It is difficult to describe the ethos of a large and diverse entity such as our Deanery but we would like to use the words 'friendly, cooperative, supportive and understanding'. Although we celebrate our diversity, we find our deepest unity in Christ.

Revd Canon Erwin Lammens
Area Dean

Lynne Gettings
Lay Chair

Revd Hannah Cooper
Assistant Area Dean



Addendum D

THE DIOCESE: A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP GULI



Covering Essex and East London, Chelmsford is one of the largest, most diverse 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 local, national and global challenges that have a direct impact on our parish churches, schools, chaplaincies and the communities we serve.

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 set out a 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 and schools. 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 vibrant of dioceses.

+Guli

Bishop of Chelmsford

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



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