



St James', Little Clacton

# The Priory Parishes, St Osyth Deanery

St Mary the Virgin, Great Bentley



St Peter and St Paul, St Osyth

# Joint Parish Profile 2024



St Andrew's, Weeley

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## Overview

A new position for a Priest-in-Charge is to be created by the combination of four rural parishes in the St Osyth Deanery. We have decided to call ourselves **The Priory Parishes**, from the religiously significant St Osyth Priory in our area. Although in many ways different in character, with individual identities which we wish to preserve, we share an underlying commitment to worship reverently, to serve our communities and to reach out to everyone, especially families and young people. We appreciate that this new arrangement will bring its challenges, not least the equitable apportionment of time, but we are nevertheless optimistic about our joint future and pledge to give every support to our new leader as they take on this pioneering role.

We welcome the opportunity to share resources, but wish to maintain our separate PCCs, with a commitment to maintain regular contact. In all four parishes, we have had recent experience of organising our services ourselves during which, despite lacking the active presence of an incumbent, each parish has continued to provide a service every Sunday; we all wish to continue this provision, for which we will need continued use of “external resources”, be they lay or ordained. This new arrangement will still require a degree of “self-help”, and it is clear this is a large task – so we are looking for someone who potentially could host a training incumbent. We recognise that moving forward together we may need to explore the patterns of worship.

We are situated to the South-east of Colchester, a thriving and historic newly designated city with good facilities for all ages and excellent communication links to the rest of the country. Other neighbouring towns are Clacton-on-Sea, Frinton and Walton-on-the-Naze (all of which have mail-line stations), with their beautiful seafronts, each very different in looks and character. All four parishes are part of the same Parishes Mission and Ministry.

### St Osyth and Great Bentley

The Churches of St Peter and St Paul at St Osyth and St Mary the Virgin at Great Bentley have been working as a joint benefice for the past eight years. With the retirement of the present Priest-in-Charge and as part of the reorganisation in this deanery, these two parishes are now joining with Weeley and Little Clacton.

### Little Clacton and Weeley

The churches of St James at Little Clacton and St Andrew at Weeley, also working as a joint benefice, have been without a priest for more than five years. During this extended interregnum, the churchwardens have valiantly maintained services, again with the help of retired priests and lay personnel living in the area.

# How we can support the new Priest in Charge

## We can offer our new Priest-in-Charge:

- A warm welcome, support, friendship and prayer
- Parishes which have become used to running themselves
- A strong and valued tradition of lay-led worship,
- A commitment to provide administrative support for you and for our parishes.
- Well maintained and locally supported church buildings and churchyards.
- Enthusiastic interest from each of our Parish Schools
- A willingness to be respectful and flexible and to have our expectations challenged
- A willingness to explore new types of services, recognising that moving forward we need to embrace new patterns of Sunday worship..
- Active rural communities with real spirit
- A beautiful rural location near the coast

## The Vicarage

The Vicarage is situated next to St Osyth Church and was purpose built in 1962 for the incumbent; it was altered and refurbished in 2008 to provide a comfortable family home.

Upstairs the house has four bedrooms, a bathroom and a separate toilet. The main bedroom has an en-suite shower and wash basin. The house has full double glazing throughout and has the benefit of solar panels. Downstairs there is a very pleasant large sitting room with an open fire, a good-sized dining room, a kitchen and a utility room. The study/office is accessed from the hallway by the main door and there is an adjacent toilet. A security system is installed and the door from the hallway leading to the rest of the house can be locked for extra privacy.



The house faces the magnificent Priory and has a double garage with ample parking to the front. There is a large pleasant, secluded garden to the rear overlooking farmland. There are views of the sea from the first floor.

# The priest we all need

## **We seek a Priest in Charge who is:**

- Passionate about rural ministry and excited by the possibilities of ministering across four diverse parishes
- Good at delegating, managing their time equitably between each parish and taking their time off
- Keen to be a visible presence in our communities, able to engage and interact with people from all walks of life
- Open to both ordained and lay support to maintain regular services in all the churches.
- Welcoming to those approaching the church for the first time, for Baptism or Weddings, and committed to outreach to the new housing developments.
- Able to undertake the training of a curate and to facilitate the development of parishioners wishing to make advancement in theological studies
- Keen to encourage unity and a strong bond across the new benefice
- Able to take us forward without leaving people alienated or left behind
- Keen to focus on connecting with children, families and young people especially through working with the parish schools

# Parish Profiles

## St Mary the Virgin, Great Bentley

### The Parish

The parish consists of the village of Great Bentley and the hamlets of Aingers Green and South Heath. Currently it has a population of about 2500 people but is expanding by some 40% with new builds. Many different people are moving here, young families & retirees from nearer London. The church has a key role to play in welcoming the new residents, nurturing their involvement and inclusion in church and Parish life.

The heart of Great Bentley is a village green of 43 acres, reputed to be the largest in the country, which is of great historical significance and the focal point of many sporting activities, as well as an annual traditional village show and carnival.

The parish is rural, with a strong farming community, but we also have many people who commute to Colchester and London via a direct train link, with connections to Harwich, Ipswich and Clacton. There is a wide variety of businesses on the Industrial Estate and on local farms.

We have a **primary school** that is to double in size, from 210 to 420 children in the next 6 years, because of the new developments around the parish. The **secondary comprehensive school** is 4 miles away in Brightlingsea, and there are **selective and independent schools** in Colchester.

The village also has a GP surgery, pharmacy, pub, bakery/cafe, Chinese takeaway and a Tesco Express. Aingers Green has a pub and a restaurant and there is another restaurant at Flag Hill.

It is a vibrant community, with football, cricket, and running clubs, a large allotment area, and a host of other clubs and societies. The parish magazine is the place to find all information, over 900 printed each month.

There is an **annual carnival** in June, and a **traditional village show** in September, which draw crowds from near and far, and in both of which church members are involved.

The church is also well supported at its own fund-raising events, in helping to collate the parish magazine each month, and in the upkeep of the churchyard, which is large and still active. Not all the people involved are church goers, but they enjoy helping to maintain what is “the heart of the parish.”

We have our own **website**, [stmaryschurchgreatbentley.co.uk](http://stmaryschurchgreatbentley.co.uk) and we are also on Facebook. The magazine content is on [greatbentleyparishcouncil.co.uk](http://greatbentleyparishcouncil.co.uk)

### The Church

#### **Pattern of Services**

**1st Sunday:** Joint sung Communion service with our sister church at St. Osyth, alternating venue, a good way to meet up and enjoy fellowship with our friends.

**2nd & 3rd Sundays 9.30:** Sung Communion if possible, morning prayer/family word and worship otherwise.

**4th Sunday 9.30:** Since joining with St Osyth, we were encouraged to run our own service, which took various forms, run by our lay-reader, with a more modern approach.

**5th Sunday 9.30:** Various formats.

**Special services:** Easter, Ascension, Harvest, Christingle, Midnight at Christmas, and occasional concerts.



The Green from the church tower



The Easter message depicted in the church porch by our flower arrangers.



Ascension morning on the tower roof after an early service.

**We have a very able organist**, who plays at the services here and at St Osyth, and is planning other musical events for the wider community to enjoy.

**0800 said Communion** was a feature, but no longer. It is hard to assess whether there would be a need for that to be reinstated. **Sunday Club** is currently suspended and would need new volunteers to take it on again if/when the need arises. **Bible Study** used to be a regular fortnightly event, and several people would be pleased to see it reinstated, perhaps jointly with other parishes. We also enjoyed annual Lent courses.

**The congregation** is mainly middle aged to elderly, with a few exceptions, and one family, with teenage children, who are regularly involved. We have had several new members join in the last 18 months, who said they found us very welcoming, and two are going forward for confirmation. We have 25-30 worshippers on a normal Sunday, with an electoral role of 42.

Three members of the congregation have recently completed the **Pastoral Care course** in Chelmsford and are beginning to serve the congregation and the wider community, with home communion, a service at the local residential care home, phone calls, and other help where necessary.

**Though small, we are an active congregation** with a high level of dedication: almost everyone has an involvement. We will welcome a new leader, we hope, to give coherence to our worship and direction in our outreach, despite being able to be with us probably only two Sundays each month – we do hope we can continue **our cooperative arrangements with St Osyth**, which will enable our priest to conduct a service at two churches on a Sunday morning, as heretofore, a pattern which our new partners at Little Clacton and Weeley also maintain between themselves.



**A Fair-Trade stall** is open nearly every Sunday at church, supported by the congregation.

## **Church and the community**

We have very good relations with our friends at **the Methodist church** in the village; we alternate the Remembrance Service each year, and attend their Covenant service, and they join us for a service in the week of Christian Unity. Coffee mornings and fund raisers are all well attended on both sides.

**We are pleased to host baptisms, weddings, and funerals**, and in 2023 we had 8 baptisms, 5 weddings and 10 funerals/interments. This brings people in, who might not normally attend church, and we try to follow up with cards for those baptised, and invitations to bereaved families for the All Soul's service.



**Knit and Natter** takes place monthly, attracting between 6-17 people, many not church members, so it offers outreach on a very informal basis.

Over 80 local families put stars recalling loved ones on our **Christmas Remembrance Tree** each year.

**Regular coffee mornings** are well attended by those in the village, and money is raised for good causes as well as church funds.

**A church hall** with disabled access, toilet facilities and a kitchen was built on the South side of the church in the late 1980s. As well as church meetings and after service fellowship, it can be hired out to people in the village for a variety of different events, which produces a small income. For the last 2 years we have hosted **an open-air theatre** in the churchyard, aimed at families, that has been very well received, attracting over 100 people each time, and with positive feedback. The church receives a percentage of the profit, which is very welcome.

**We have a ring of 8 bells** which are rung for all services. Additionally, they are rung for weddings, and to mark local & national events. We have an enthusiastic and vibrant bell ringing group (20 in total) who meet on Monday evenings for practice. New members aged 11 and upwards are actively encouraged to join. They are taught by suitably trained and experienced tutors who ensure their progress to ringing with the band. The bells are becoming difficult to ring so we are currently raising funds to enable a **complete re-hang** to ensure that ringing continues for the future. The ringers are a friendly, inclusive group who socialise together in a jointly respectful way.



**The local primary school** is not a church school, but they and we would welcome more interaction. They have a Christmas service in the church, and we run a Good Friday workshop, and some activity in the summer, but visiting the school, perhaps for the important festivals of Christmas and Easter, would be much appreciated. **A local Pre-school performs** their Nativity play in church each year.

### Church buildings and resources

The Grade 1 listed church dates from c.1130 – 1150 and is a simple country church with no side aisles. A modern hall and facilities, including disabled, are placed on the South side, with a link passage.

**The building** is in reasonable condition; we usually manage to fulfil all the vital points each Quinquennial and respond to any emergencies. The vestry beneath the tower is in the process of **upgrade to office, meeting place and vestry**. Some of the cost of this has come from a Lost Facilities grant.



Exhibits at recent Art & Flower Festival

The next big project will be **rebuilding the 19C porch**, but fundraising will be required for that: building costs have risen considerably since the inception of the upgrade.

We are well supported by members who are on the **PGS scheme**, income from the parish magazine, after expenses, and our **3 main fund raisers each year**: the May Fair, the autumn Art and Flower festival and the Christmas Tree Festival. So far, we have been able to pay our parish share in full.

financial support for any incidental expenses that might be incurred.

**The churchyard** is well looked after, and a separate 100 club raises money each year towards its upkeep. We are still receiving burials.

**We try and maintain outreach to charities with donations** at Christmas and proceeds from coffee mornings. We are a collection point for food for the Brightlingsea Food bank, shoe-boxes for Samaritan's Purse at Christmas, and make an annual collection via boxes and the Christingle service for the Children's Society.

**A paid PCC secretary** deals with much of the admin, also reclaims Gift Aid for us, and will take on additional tasks if possible. **The Treasurer** has help from a Diocese accountant to compile the accounts each year. A summary of the 2022 accounts is attached. More detailed version is available from the Treasurer.



Gt Bentley Primary school choir performs at the Christmas Tree Festival

# St James, Little Clacton.

## The Benefice.

The Benefice was formed in 1979, bringing two neighbouring villages that form a ribbon development along the road between Colchester and Clacton-on-Sea.

Whilst the two churches maintain their independent parish focus, there is mutually beneficial joining together socially, benefice Services, and a highly successful joint parish monthly magazine widely read across both parishes.

The village of Little Clacton is set amongst rural agricultural land but is under pressure from increasing residential development that could provide us with renewal of the church congregation. The church is at a cross-roads, located at the centre of the village close to a pub and two general stores a handful of other shops and a Primary School.

## Services and Church Life.

During the period of interregnum and following the lifting of Covid restrictions, we hold a Common Worship Holy Communion Service each Sunday at 11am conducted by a cadre of retired clergy who will have already presided over a similar service at St. Andrew's, Weeley.



We have an Organist and a team of volunteer bell-ringers to toll the bells welcoming a congregation of around 14.

Attendance doubles at Easter, Patronal and Christmas services, with usually, a full church for Christmas Eve midnight service. We arrange an outdoor Carol service on the Village Green mid-December in co-operation with the Salvation Army Band which usually attracts about 100 villagers. The local Primary School uses the church for its nativity and Easter productions. We have built a link with the school and St. James' history is now part of their history programme.

The Parish Room is attached to the church by the North door. It has kitchen and toilet facilities. It is hired out to local groups, meetings and used for church fund-raising events. We have a group of ladies who decorate our church throughout the year and arrange an annual flower festival. A sub-committee of the PCC organise arrange and provide the catering to celebrate special church dates and fund-raising events.



The Friends of St. James' (FoSJ) is a registered charity whose purpose is to raise funds to enable this historic Grade 2\* Listed building of early Norman and Medieval architecture to be preserved for future generations. Funds are collected by membership, donations and events to enable works that cannot be financed from the normal income of the Parochial Church Council (PCC). Membership is made up from the church congregation, villagers and others far afield as Scotland, all dedicated to preserving for worship, this beautiful ancient village church.

## The History of the Building.

The Church is an almost unspoilt example of early Norman architecture. The Chancel was built around 1100 and the Nave lengthened in early 14<sup>th</sup> century.



The Domesday Book of 1086 records that parts of the Manor of Clacintune were given by the Bishop of London to five knights, whom he supplied for the defence of the realm. Early in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Bishop Richard de Belmeis acquired the Manor and granted it to the newly founded Priory of St. Osyth.



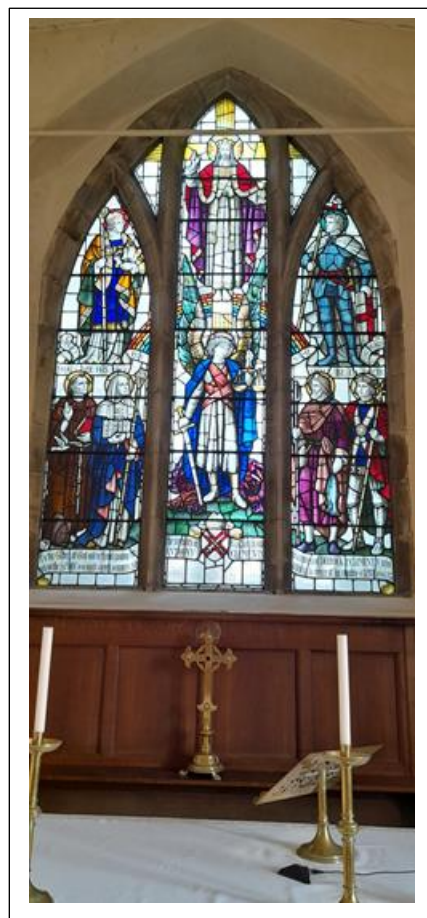
**The porch at the entrance** is credited to be constructed in 1381. Just inside the church there stands a font made from a solid block of Purbeck marble circa 1190. Many of the windows around the church are 14th century origin on the north wall in the Nave is a large Elizabethan 3 round headed en cusped lights window and in the chancel is a genuine very narrow Norman window set next to the Aumbry.

The magnificent glass in the east window was put in as a memorial in 1945. The pulpit, choir stalls and altar rail date from 1952 and complement the new limed oak pews fitted in 1963 again fitted with doors given in memory of relatives, these replaced high box pine pews of 1847.

**In the timber clad bell tower hang 3 bells** the oldest cast by Robert Crouch in 1437. It is thought that only 13 bells exist and ours is the only one in Essex. Bell two inscribed miles grey 1652 and Thomas Gardner cast No.3 bell in 1748.

In the South wall of the chancel there is a **rare ancient double pessina** circa 1300 unused wine and water blessed by the priest was returned to consecrated earth wine in one bowl and water in the other.

During a service in 2022 it was noticed a timber member of a roof Truss in the Nave was hanging down, secured at just one end over the pews. It was temporarily secured for 11 months while a faculty was approved. The roof was surveyed and preventative repairs carried out to secure the roof, hopefully, for a further 10 years.



*East window showing St. Osyth, St. Francis, St. James St. Michael Arch Angel, God the Father. and St. George*

Current project 2023/2024 is the repair and re-cladding of the bell tower. Whilst we are working to specification and approved quotation. We have diocesan permission to start work and hope to start in the Spring of 2024. The last Quinquennial Survey states; remedial work is required to various structural building and service features of the church. To meet grade listed building requirements, health and safety standards, the cost of these works is estimated at £42,000 including the belfry repair.

### **Overview St. James' Little Clacton.**

The churches of St. James' at little Clacton and at St. Andrew's at Weeley, are approximately 2.5 miles apart. They have been without an incumbent Priest for their joint benefice since 2016 and without a Priest-in-charge since just before the 2020 pandemic lock-down. Sunday services have

been maintained by a heroic cadre of retired clergy with only very occasional exceptions when lay persons have had to preside.

### **Our Vision and hope for the future.**

Despite a regular congregation of only a dozen persons, there is at St. James' a 'floating' congregation of probably over 50 souls. This was demonstrated at last years '9 Lessons and Carols' in the run-up to Christmas, which was attended by 36 villagers despite the foul weather. Unfortunately, a Vicar could not be found to lead the service, which was conducted by the Church Warden.

St. James' is surrounded by a **working churchyard** and consequently receives many visitors, mostly, relatives of the deceased from within and outside the village. It is sad that the church cannot be left open during the day for prayer, but, must remain locked except for Sunday worship for security reasons.

Post lock-down, the church wardens re-established contact with the village Primary School which has now used the church for its Christmas and Easter productions in front of parents, for 2022 and 2023. It is a hope to strengthen this relationship with the school after a lapse post 2016 and so introduce its parents and children to more active participation with the church. For this to happen, a new incumbent or Priest-in-charge is deemed essential.

Whilst many people in the village do not attend Sunday Worship there are ladies who regularly arrange the flowers and a group of men who just turn up to ring the bells prior to the Sunday service. This, after word got round in the local pub that bellringers were needed! We do not say too much about the three bells, as they are priceless, one being medieval.

Fund-raising is a continuous occupation for the PCC and its supporting registered charity; 'Friends of St. James' and we are about to renew the cladding on the belfry. Permission has been granted by the diocese and the funds are in place. Work was expected to start last Summer after the Bat Conservation Trust had given the diocese the 'All clear' to begin, however, our preferred builder disappeared into hospital for a new knee. He now expects to start work in the Spring of 2024. It is thought that the bellringers keep away the bats!

St. James' hosts a steady stream of funerals, weddings and baptisms and the small, ancient church can often be filled to bursting with families and friends on these sad and happy occasions.

St. James' and St. Andrew's are supported by a healthy parish magazine which anybody can contribute to and can be a good read. Even the adverts can be interesting, and people often turn to it, first, for skilled workmen, plumbers and electricians.



In April 2023 the FoSJ's decided it was time to use the Parish Room to fund-raise as nothing had been organised since before the Pandemic lock-down and so a Piano concert wjth cheese and wine was organised. Surprising numbers of people came forward to play and entertain.

In 2022 a 'Just Giving' exercise to raise funds for the repair of the tower collected in monies from all over the country and Scotland.

# **St. Peter & St. Paul, St Osyth**

## **Our future, our strengths and the challenges ahead.**

We have laid out our hopes and direction for the mission and ministry of our Grade 1 listed Church, in order that potential candidates can see what the challenges and opportunities of our Parish are and the skills and talents that we are seeking.

## **What kind of Church do we want to be?**

We want our Church to continue to be a friendly, welcoming and open Church at the centre of the community with Christianity at its heart, reaching out to people of all ages and backgrounds whilst moving with the times and encompassing different modes of worship without losing all our traditions.

## **What we have to offer:**

- people who quietly go about using their talents for the benefit of the Church and the wider community.
- our friendliness and 'open door' policy, enabling the community and visitors alike to enjoy the peace and serenity of our beautiful Church every day.
- a willingness to explore other types of services with the new incumbent.
- our strong and committed Warden, Deputy Wardens, PCC Members and members of the Church Family, who willingly give their time and talents to make so many things possible.
- our positive and happy relationship with St Osyth Church of England Primary School.
- sound fabric of the Church building enhanced by support and dedication of both Church family and local people.
- St Osyth Life, our popular Church magazine which was a Winner of the Pride of Tendring Awards in 2023.
- our active support with the community of the Trussell Trust Food Bank run by the Salvation Army.
- the finances of the Church which are on a sound footing.

## **The People Who Serve the Church and its Community**

- we are an incredibly fortunate Church as we have very many people, who give of their time and talents to share in the load of tasks, which are central to the life and Worship of our Church, its fabric and Churchyard; it is truly impressive.
- we employ key people whose role, albeit part – time, is to reduce the workload of the Priest. We have an Administrator, a Wedding Co-ordinator, a Christening Co-ordinator, a Verger for Funerals and a P.C.C. Secretary. The Church Warden, three Deputy Wardens together with a significant number of laity are active as readers, intercessors and welcomers as well as those who administer the Chalice.
- we have an enthusiastic choir, an organist and a talented group of bell ringers all of whom enhance our worship.
- there are few people, who attend our Church, if any, who do not contribute in some way to its life and worship.

## **What We Do: in the Church and with the Community**

- Saturday Morning Coffee Pop-In  
*Held every Saturday morning between 10.00 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. A well-attended community event.*
- Refreshments after the 11.00 a.m. Sunday Service  
*A chance for fellowship, coffee and cake.*
- Harvest Lunch  
*In September 2023, we held another successful Harvest Lunch after the Harvest Festival Service. 54 members of the congregation attended this enjoyable event. Part of the proceeds was donated to a local charity - Sailship Training and Learning for Life.*



*Our Church is open daily from 8am-3pm.*



*Palm Sunday-the donkey, enjoying carrots and attention having walked the 'Walk of Witness' accompanied by the choir and members of the congregation 2023.*

- Remembrance Sunday  
*We hold a Remembrance Service every year, where we are joined by the village uniformed organisations, St. Osyth Royal British Legion, St. Osyth Primary School, and local businesses. After the service, the Wreaths are placed on the War Memorials in the Churchyard and Cowley Park.*
- Palm Sunday  
*Every Palm Sunday, as part of the service, a Walk of Witness, led by a Donkey is walked with the choir and members of the community from the Village Hall to the Church.*
- Weekly Pew Sheet and Notices  
*This is produced every week and emailed to 95 members of the Church and the community, copies are also available in Church. It contains all the Service details, notices and events for the following week.*
- Alms House Trust and St Osyth Social Club  
*Members of the PCC act as Trustees for these organisations and meetings are held four times a year.*
- Summer and Christmas Fayres  
*Two major events in our Church calendar, which are very well supported by the local community and further afield. They are great fund raisers for our Church.*
- Christmas Angels  
*For eight years, at Christmas everyone in our local community is given the opportunity to remember loved ones by writing a personalised message on an 'Angel', which is then placed on the branches of our Christmas Lights tree in the Churchyard. This act of kindness, undertaken by volunteers means a very great deal to many people.*
- Lunch time Recitals  
*During summer 2023, we held three Lunchtime Recitals with refreshments. They were well attended and raised money for the Organ Repair and Music Fund. These Recitals will take place again during the summer of 2024.*
- Emergency and Disaster Appeals  
*We always support Appeals and arrange additional collections.*
- Trussell Trust/Salvation Army Foodbank  
*The Church acts as the main collection point for food donations from the local community. In 2022 at the Village Carol Service with the Salvation Army Band, over 444 kg of food was donated and £1,075.00 was given in donations. At Harvest Festival, 200kg of food was donated by Church members, the children from the Primary School and local community.*
- The Warm Hub  
*During the winter months of Jan, Feb, March 2022, members of the Church and the local community manned a hub in 'The Hoy' public house providing warmth and meals to all those that needed them. It was made possible by a very generous donation by a resident.*
- Safeguarding  
*Disclosure Barring System checks and relevant safeguarding training have been completed by all members of the PCC and other responsible people.*



*The Summer Fayre held annually in the Churchyard, much enjoyed by the Community.*

### **St.Osyth Facts and Figures**

The population of our thriving village is 5200. We have a range of local shops and businesses including a chemist, butcher, hairdressers, barbers, Nisa and Premier Stores, a Post Office, pubs, eateries and take away outlets. We are fortunate to have around 40 different clubs/societies/organisations which are well supported in the village. Regular bus services are available to Clacton and Colchester.

### **Worship Services**

The information concerning our regular services is given on the Benefice spreadsheet.

During the period of absence, due to the ill health of our incumbent, we have continued to observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Compline, Good Friday and All Souls services. We hold a Taize service at regular intervals.

The Church holds other special services they are:

- Remembrance Day – always very well supported.



*Village Carol Service - over 200 members of the Community singing carols with the Salvation Army Band, December 2023.*

- St.Osyth Day – 7<sup>th</sup> October which is held in St.Osyth Priory Chapel, by kind permission of the owners.
  - The Village Carol Service with the Salvation Army Band.
- Looking to the future it is very much hoped that we can continue to have a regular Sunday Service in our Church. On the Sundays when this may not be possible the P.C.C, with agreement of the incumbent, will try to ensure that a licensed Priest or Lay Minister is available to lead the service.
- Again, if possible, we would like to continue to celebrate the 8am Communion Service held on the first Sunday of the month and the weekly Thursday 10am Communion Service.

### **Church of England Primary School**

The catchment area for the school mirrors our Parish boundary. The school is part of the Vine Trust and is rated as “good” by both the Trust and Ofsted (June 2023). The role number is 298. We

have an excellent relationship with the School’s Headteacher, Mark Carter-Tufnell and his staff and the children enjoyed having the Vicar leading them in worship once a week. Major festival worship services are held in the Church.

Mr. Carter-Tufnell fully supports the weekly lunch time **3 G’s Club**, “**God’s Good Guy’s**”, which has run since 2017 as part of our Outreach. It is well attended with 12-15 children, regularly willing to give up their lunch time play. From time-to-time 3G’s bring their lunch into the Church where they love to explore the building and have fun.



*Key Stage 1 children rehearsing for their Carol Service in Church. December 2023.*

### **Sunday Club**

Prior to 2020 the Club was well attended, meeting every Sunday. However, since the end of the pandemic the numbers have fallen. We now have one leader and the Club is available on the second and fourth Sundays.

### **Bible Reading Group/Course**

The Bible Reading Group meets regularly. We need to explore other ways of engaging people in Bible study. At certain times of the year, e.g. Lent, Advent, pamphlets & books are made available to those of our congregation who may not be able to attend some or all of the Reading Group sessions.

### **St Osyth Life Magazine**

First produced in 1883, a single sheet of paper folded to make four pages by the then Vicar Rev. Henry Chapman, priced at 1 penny! Now delivered free to 2400 houses in the Parish of St.Osyth. Totally dependent on the advertising to fund its production and organised by a team of volunteers and the 70 plus people who deliver it. An excellent and much appreciated magazine.

### **Website ([www.stosythparishchurch.co.uk](http://www.stosythparishchurch.co.uk))**

The Church has had a website for several years now. In 2018 it was redesigned by a local business, Naglotech. It is maintained by Naglotech and updated regularly by our own webmaster. The website provides an easy route for parishioners, new residents and visitors to find out about our church, its contacts and its life week by week. During Lockdown the site spiritually led prayers, streamed services and provided up to date relevant notices.

The Church and the community recognise that there are challenges ahead as we move from a Benefice of two churches to four, but we know that there are opportunities too.

We look forward to sharing both with the new incumbent and moving forward positively for the benefit of all.



*Enjoying Harvest Lunch together, September 2023.*

# St Andrew's, Weeley

## 1. THE PARISH

Despite being close to the conurbation of Clacton on sea we remain essentially a self-contained village with its own Parish Council, a traditional rural community. 480 New homes have been approved recently in Weeley some 200 already under construction; we are trying to adapt to this considerable building development albeit with mixed feelings. There is little local employment therefore the working population generally commute out of the village. There is, a post office, a bakers, a popular garden centre and two pubs. In the village there is a Scout group, an enthusiastic Residents Association and well used village hall.



Weeley has a Church of England primary school which has regular contact with the church.

In 1979 a joint benefice was formed with St James Little Clacton. Both churches maintain their independent parish focus although there is a mutually beneficial approach, joining together socially, for occasional benefice services and a highly successful joint parish magazine.

Despite the good mix of people in the villages, we have to accept that we are an ageing congregation, and we recognise that we do not have enough young people or families; an area where we hope to improve on with the new housing potential.

## 2. SERVICES AND CHURCH LIFE

St Andrews has a Common Worship, Eucharistic based churchmanship. Vestments are often worn and sung elements are incorporated into the services.

Our congregation is a mixed age-range, some youngsters through to members in their 80s. The monthly Lay led Family Services generally sees a more youthful, family attendance. Our website is at <https://www.standrewsweeley.co.uk/>.



### **Typical Sunday Services are:**

#### 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays

9.30 Common Worship Parish Communion  
average attendance 12

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday

10.00am Family Praise  
average attendance 24 including 6 children

Music is an integral part of our worship, we have an organists and use hymn books.

The parish has managed to maintain this service pattern in recent years and during the interregnum with the support of retired clergy and lay assistance from elsewhere in the deanery. We have grown used to this variety of service leaders and recognise that will be likely to continue into the new benefice. The pandemic obviously curtailed services for a period but we have recovered well and the previous patterns of worship have been maintained.

## Other Services

- There has traditionally been 'Midnight Mass' on Christmas Eve and Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Ascension, and All Souls were observed, sadly we have not been able to provide all these in recent years.
- The Christmas Carol Service is popular and separately we hold Christingle Services for younger folk.
- The Service on Remembrance Sunday is always well attended by parishioners and uniformed organisations.

## Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals:

We have a welcoming approach to the opportunities from occasional offices.

6 Baptisms in the past year which are generally held outside of the regular service pattern.

Typically about 6 weddings and 6 funerals take place in the church each year. The district crematorium is situated in Weeley.

The Electoral Roll at Weeley is 40 (10 Non Resident)



*Confirmation Service with Bishop Roger  
Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022*

## *A message from St Andrew's C of E Primary School:*

*St Andrew's C of E Primary school are keen to continue their long established links with St Andrew's Church. Our pupils would love to share their worship in church with the new incumbent. We enjoy the walk through the village to the parish church four times a year for Harvest Festival, Christingle making, a Christmas Carol Concert and an Easter Celebration. Our classes sing, pray and share learning together at the church, and our Year 6 pupils take a leading role in reading prayers and bible readings. We would ideally like a parish priest who can deliver exciting, child friendly worship each term in our school hall to enhance our daily worship lead by staff and pupils, and share the activities that we use to enhance the pupils' spiritual growth in our Reflection Room. We would also invite the chosen candidate to take part in our annual leavers' assembly, and present bibles and transition materials to our year 6 class. All the pupils, children and parents are looking forward to meeting whoever God calls to share our faith journey with us.*



*In Love, Trust and Wisdom*

*Diane Fawcett, October 2023*



*St Andrew's school visiting the church*

## The Parish Magazine

For many years we have published a joint Parish Magazine with St James Lt Clacton each month. The magazine contains a monthly letter from the Parish Priest, details of services, news from village organisations, public information, and items of interest from individuals. Priced at a mere 30p it is delivered by a dedicated band of helpers and widely available in the parish shops. Some 500 copies are circulated in Weeley each month and it is seen as a most useful parish resource as well as a very useful source of revenue.

## Social Activities

We hold a range of social activities which are generally well supported, including:

- Harvest Suppers
- Quiz nights
- Cake Stalls and coffee mornings
- Concerts
- Gift Days



*School Carols at St Andrew's*

### **3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF ST ANDREW'S**

The church was originally built close to Weeley Hall, the Manor of Weeley, where the settlement was at that time. In 1881 it was rebuilt in Victorian Gothic style retaining its position in the fields.

The church is largely unchanged from the Victorian rebuild, is well maintained and well presented. Recently a specific bequest enabled the provision of a newly refurbished pipe organ.



Being situated off the main road and often referred to as 'the church in the fields' it is a popular destination for walkers who enjoy the beauty and peace of the churchyard. Facilities are limited, there is no mains water or drainage, nonetheless we provide refreshments as best we can and recently installed a modern ecological 'composting' toilet!

### **4. OUR VISION AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE**

#### **Our Strengths:**

- Well supported by the parish at large
- Good links with St Andrew's Church school.
- Popular venue for weddings, and funerals
- Sound finances
- Well maintained buildings and churchyard.
- Well supported social events

#### **Our Recognised Weaknesses:**

- We are ageing, and do not attract enough young people or families.
- We rely very much on 'vital few'
- A need for leadership looking to the future.
- Making ourselves more relevant in the village.

#### **Our Opportunities**

- Substantial new housing developments
- Popular parish schools

#### **Challenges for our new Priest**

We are emerging from some years without a parish Priest. Initially a priest in declining health, then a temporary appointment of a Priest in Charge by a busy neighbouring priest followed by a protracted Interregnum.

Consistent, supportive leadership is our keen desire.

We look forward to working supportively and positively with our new Parish Priest.



# The Chelmsford Diocese



## 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 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](http://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/travelling-well-together)

# The St Osyth Deanery

## A message from the Rural Dean, Rev'd Laurie Bond

*The St. Osyth Deanery covers the southern part of the Tendring peninsula and includes Alresford, Brightlingsea, St. Osyth, Clacton, Frinton and Walton. Being a coastal area, we welcome huge numbers of visitors in the summer months. There has been a very successful Frinton Mission running for many years, which is an ecumenical venture.*

*There is a two day Clacton Airshow each year, which attracts extremely large numbers to the area.*

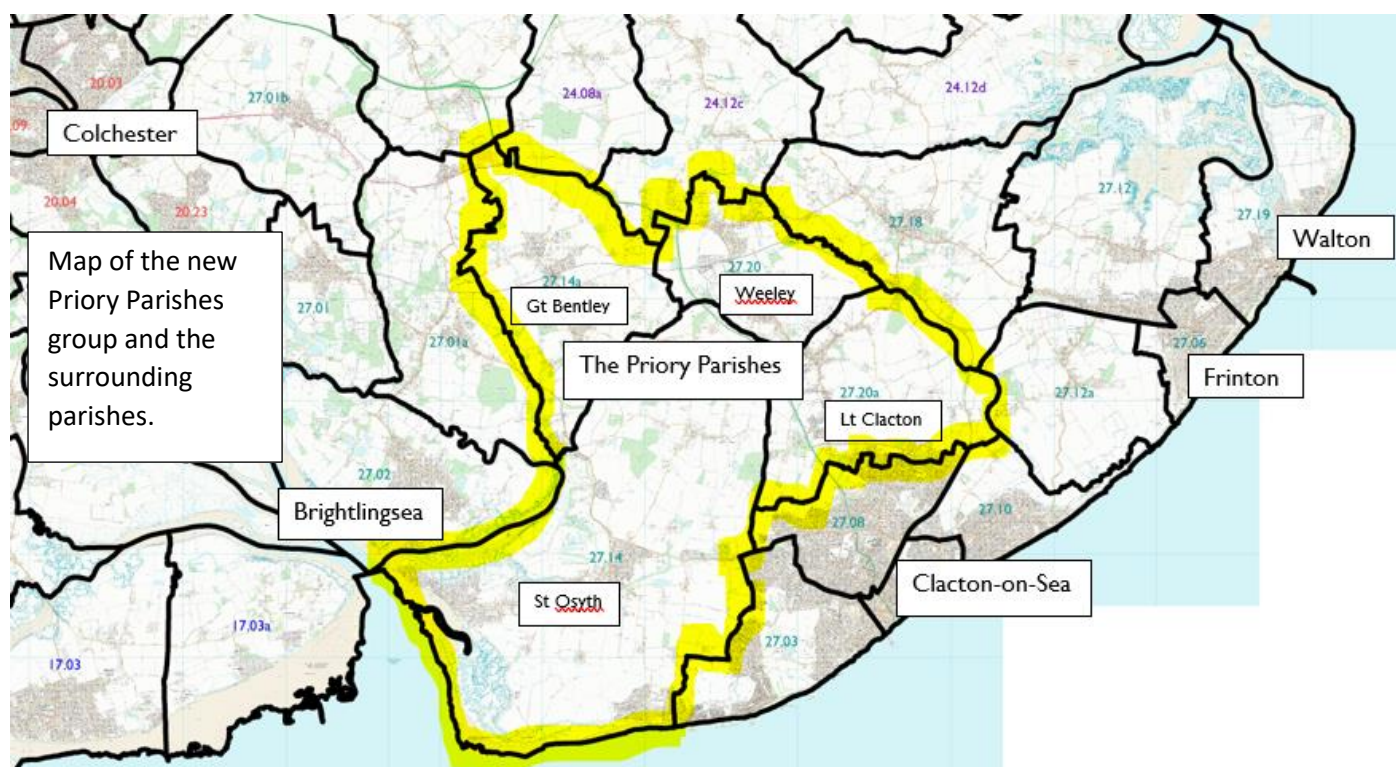
*New housebuilding is a feature across the deanery, which will also include a new Garden Community in the coming years, offering new opportunities for mission and outreach*

*The Deanery currently assists with the financing of a Debt Coach with Christians Against Poverty, which has been possible with the support of diocesan strategic development funding.*

*With the increasing focus on the Mission and Ministry, the Chapter has decided to meet three times a year for a discussion over lunch. There is a variety of church styles within the deanery, but there is a good working relationship between the churches.*

**Laurie Bond**

**Area Dean**



## Summary of statistics

	<b>Gt Bentley</b>	<b>Lt. Clacton</b>	<b>St Osyth</b>	<b>Weeley</b>
<b>Population</b>	2,500	3,204	5,200	2,236
<b>Electoral Roll</b>	42	27	77	40
<b>Baptisms</b>	8	3	10	6
<b>Weddings</b>	5	2	2	6
<b>Funerals</b>	10	6	12	6
<b>Current Sunday Services</b>  <i>(a summary as now, full details in individual profiles)</i>	10.00am Joint Benefice Sung Communion (1st Sun)  9.30am Sung Communion  9.30am Informal Service (4th Sun)	11.00am Holy Communion	8.00am Communion (1st Sun) 10.00am Joint Benefice Sung Communion (1st Sun) 11.00am Parish Communion (2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> ) 11.00am Sung Communion (3 <sup>rd</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> ) Taize Service (Quart'ly)	9.30am Parish Communion  10.00am Family Praise (2nd Sun)
<b>Average Sunday attendance at main service</b>	28	14	46	15
<b>Primary School</b>	Primary School in Parish	Primary School in Parish	C of E Primary School	C of E Primary School
<b>2023 Parish Share Requirement</b> <i>(* Lt Clacton and Weeley receive 50% long term vacancy credit on this figure)</i>	£19,879	£11,959 *	£18,336	£10,920 *
<b>2022 Income</b>	£52,078	£18,500	£81,395	£31,081
<b>2022 Expenditure</b>	£53,789	£11,448	£92,056	£20,045
<b>2022 Excess of Income over Expenditure</b>	(£1,711)	£6,769	(£10,661)	£11,035
<b>2022 Total Reserves</b>	£22,500	£23,967	£97,003	£50,119
<b>Paid support</b>	Paid PCC Secretary	None	Administrator Admin Assistant Wedding Coordinator Funeral Vergers PCC Secretary	None
<b>Church Hall</b>	Church Hall attached to church (also purpose-built office)	Parish Room attached to church	Church room inside church	None
<b>Churchyard</b>	Open	Open	Closed	Open
<b>Parish Mag Circulation</b>	900	150	2400	500

## Map of part of the St Osyth Deanery

