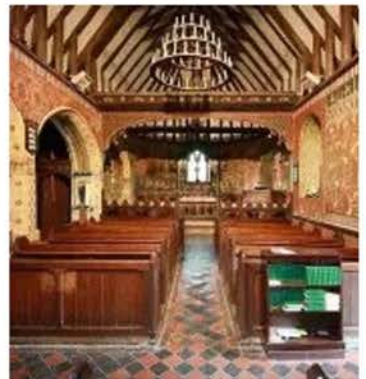




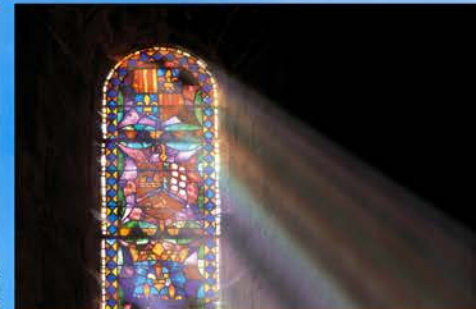
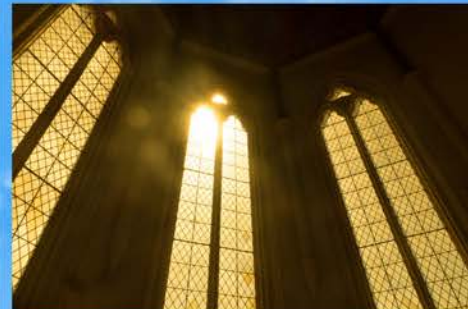
CENTRE FOR WORSHIP
&
SPIRITUALITY
THE
BEACON
= **GROUP** =



MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES



NEW TEAM MINISTRY



HEART OF WITHAM DEANERY

**“COULD YOU BE ONE OF THE TEAM
VICARS WE ARE LOOKING FOR?”**

CONTENTS

- 02 THE DIOCESE - A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP GULI
- 03 WELCOME TO THE DEANERY OF WITHAM
- 05 OUR NEW TEAM MINISTRY
- 07 WELCOME TO THE CLUSTER
- 09 ADMINISTRATOR
- 10 PERSON SPECIFICATION
- 13 ST.PETER'S - GREAT TOTHAM
- 15 ALL SAINTS' - LITTLE TOTHAM
- 17 ST PETER'S - GOLDHANGER
- 19 ST BARTHOLOMEW'S, WICKHAM BISHOPS & ST NICHOLAS',
LITTLE BRAXTED
- 23 THE VICARAGE
- 24 SAFEGUARDING





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



WELCOME TO THE

DEANERY

OF

Wilham



REVD DR JONATHAN PRITCHARD,
AREA DEAN



WITHAM DEANERY IS A LARGELY RURAL AREA OF MID-ESSEX, STRETCHING SOME 25 MILES EAST TO WEST AND 15 MILES NORTH TO SOUTH, AND COMPRISING 33 PARISHES WITH 36 ACTIVE CHURCHES, PLUS TWO CLOSED CHURCHES.

Witham Deanery is a largely rural area of mid-Essex, stretching some 25 miles east to west and 15 miles north to south, and comprising 33 parishes with 36 active churches, plus two closed churches.

We are something of an 'in-between' deanery – a diverse mix of town, rural and coastal parishes, focused on the A12 corridor, plus a very 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 unified deaneries - Braintree (to the north), Chelmsford (to the south-west) and Colchester (north-east), Witham also comprises parts of three local authorities - Braintree, Colchester and Maldon.

The diversity of our deanery is part of its attraction: we have areas of great natural beauty with picturesque villages, fine historic churches and the delights of the Blackwater estuary. Mersea is a popular holiday destination, and the large village of Tiptree (12,000+ 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). Along with 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 for new housing developments throughout the southeast/ London orbital area.

The town of Witham has by far the largest

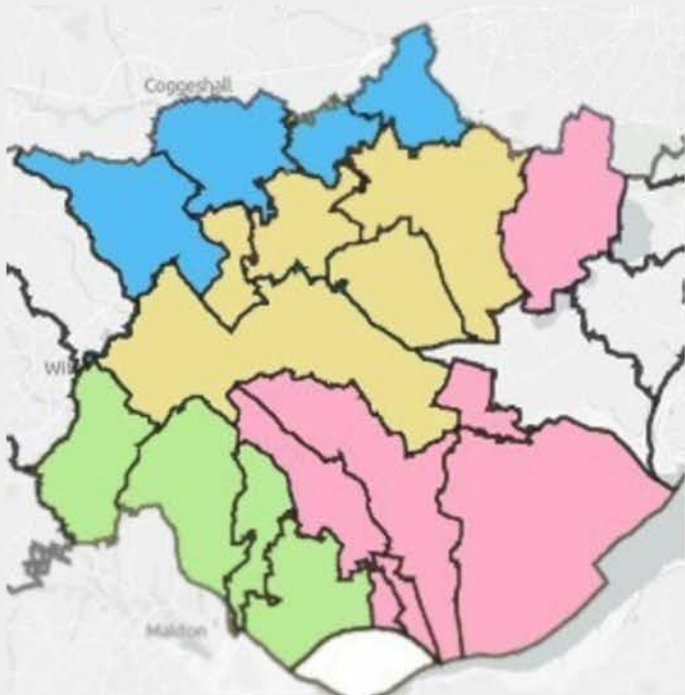
population in the Deanery: 25,500 at the 2011 Census, it is now at least 30,000 and will be close to 40,000 by 2030. The Chipping Hill area at the north end of town dates from prehistoric and Saxon times; the town centre developed from the 12th Century, and in the 18th Century became a staging-post on the London-Ipswich road. Witham expanded rapidly in the 1960s-70s, with several outer housing estates built through a re-housing programme with the (then) Greater London Council. Significantly more housing estates (largely private) are currently being built around the edge, mainly in the south-west but also the north-east, with at least 2,000 new homes recently and with 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. Currently one large team ministry, Witham and Villages, covers the north-west corner of the deanery, while the new Central Team Ministry will cover the central, north-eastern and south-western areas. Two smaller benefices, one based around Mersea and the other around Rowhedge, make up the southern and eastern parts of the deanery. Witham Deanery Synod meets three times a year and is well attended, with the active participation of deanery reps. Our synod meetings are usually 'open', meaning that anyone from a local church can attend for a specific item or for the whole meeting. There is good support and fellowship between the deanery clergy and licensed lay ministers, who meet together once a month in our open and friendly Chapter. We have a 'chapter book' that we read together and enjoy sharing our ministry in other ways. We always look forward to welcoming new people to the Chapter and our Deanery.



OUR NEW TEAM

MINISTRY



SIMON MAY,
DEANERY LAY CHAIR

“WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?”

Thank you for your interest in this exciting new post in our yet-to-be-named brand new team.

As part of the implementation of our Deanery Plan, we are joining together four existing benefices in the centre of the Witham Deanery to create a new Team Ministry with four full-time stipendiary clergy working alongside a large team of Lay Ministers, Self-supporting and Retired Clergy, a Youth Worker, a team of Administrators and our dedicated Church wardens and PCC members.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

We believe people flourish when they are working creatively with others in healthy teams. Parish clergy need the support of their peers. No one can be brilliant at everything, but together we have a vast range of experience and skills. No challenge is ever faced alone. We pray, eat, drink tea, plan and laugh together. We enable everyone to use their strengths and contribute fully to the life of the whole benefice.

We believe it is good for our parishes too to be working in partnership with one another, sharing resources and good ideas. Together, we can put on events and run activities that our smaller churches wouldn't be able to manage on their own. Together, we can more effectively serve our village communities and bring the good news of God's love to the people around us.

We are located in rural Essex between Chelmsford, Colchester and the coast. We are within easy reach of the A12 and the train line to London. We have the tourist attractions of Layer Marney Tower, Abberton Reservoir, Tollesbury Marina, Tiptree Jam Factory and Colchester Zoo just on our boundary. This is a lovely place to live with beautiful bluebell woods, nature reserves, riverside walks and country pubs.

We are currently four separate benefices:

KELVEDON & FEERING

One full-time Priest-in-Charge who is also our Area Dean, Simon Garwood.

THRUSTABLE & WINSTRY TEAM MINISTRY

One full-time Team Rector and one half-time Team Vicar (currently vacant)

THE BLACKWATER BENEFICE

One full-time Rector (vacant)

WICKHAM BISHOPS WITH LITTLE BRAXTED

One half-time Vicar (vacant)

Our new structure will be an eighteen-parish Team Ministry made up of four clusters, each with a full-time stipendiary priest. The other members of the Ministry Team will work in different parishes or sometimes across the whole benefice, depending on their role and preferences. We are in the very early stages of forming the new team, so we haven't yet chosen a name for the whole benefice or for the clusters within it. It's a great time to join us and be part of shaping something new.

We are very much a work in progress!

The four clusters will be:

1. **Blue** - Kelvedon, Feering, Copford and Easthorpe – led by Revd Canon Simon Garwood as Team Vicar (The Roman Road Parishes)
2. **Yellow** - Tiptree with Tolleshunt Knights and Great Braxted, Messing, Inworth, Layer Marney and Layer Breton with Birch – (vacant) led by the Team Rector (The Heathland Parishes)
3. **Green** - Wickham Bishops with Little Braxted, Great Totham, Little Totham and Goldhanger – led by a Team Vicar (vacant) (The Beacon Parishes)
4. **Pink** - Layer de la Haye, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Tolleshunt Major, Tollesbury and Salcott-cum-Virley – led by a recently appointed Team Vicar, Revd Jo Wood (The Waterside Parishes)

Some of these parishes have been working together for many years, while others are just beginning to form relationships. Every parish is committed to serving the people of the local area and to growing the church, both spiritually and numerically. Some of our parishes are well-supported financially and are able to pay parish share in full every year. Others struggle to cover their full costs. Full accounts for each parish are available on request.

Our question to you is: do you believe God might be calling you to the new Team Vicar post in our benefice?

Please read through the profile that follows. We hope they will give you something of the flavour of our parishes and people and give you an idea of the kind of priest we are looking for.

WELCOME TO THE

CLUSTER



WELCOME TO THE BEACON GROUP OF CHURCHES



We are delighted to introduce you to the Beacon Group of Churches. This is an exciting time in our journey as we prayerfully discern what God has planned for our parishes and as we prepare to welcome a new Vicar.

We are a group of parishes that are clustered around Beacon Hill, with links between our parishes going back over many years. Three of our parishes have been working together for some time (Great Totham, Little Totham and Goldhanger) and we have been developing a wider relationship that includes Wickham Bishops with Little Braxted over the past year.

Ours group is committed to unity, collaboration, and growth. While each parish retains its distinct character, worshipping style, and strengths, we are intentionally drawing closer together so that, as a united group, we can serve our communities more effectively and offer something for everyone.

PREPARING FOR A NEW CHAPTER

We have already begun preparing for the arrival of our new Vicar:

- Creating a shared identity as a cluster, rooted in our common faith and mission.
- Meeting together on the first Saturday of every month to pray, placing our future firmly in God's hands.
- Developing an emblem that reflects our unity while honouring the individuality of our different parish communities.
- Encouraging mutual support and fellowship, with members attending services in neighbouring parishes and praying for one another and for the communities we serve.

- Holding our first Beacon Group United Service in January, which was a joyful and well-attended occasion, strengthening our sense of shared purpose and vision.

A CLUSTER WITH STRENGTH AND DIVERSITY

As we have worked more closely together, we have begun to identify and celebrate the particular gifts of each parish — from different worshipping styles to varied ministries and community connections.

By uniting, we are discovering that our diversity is a strength. Together, we are able to reach a wider range of people and make a greater impact across our communities.

We believe this is a significant moment in our shared journey. We are praying for a Vicar who will embrace this spirit of unity, encourage our developing identity, and help us grow in faith, confidence, and mission.

In return, you will find committed congregations, a willingness to work collaboratively, and a genuine openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We are excited about the future and look forward with hope to the next chapter in the life of the Beacon Group of Churches.



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 existing Blackwater Benefice and a position we would wish to maintain. There is currently Diocesan Mission Opportunity Funding to expand the work of the administrator across the whole of this cluster of parishes. The current Administrator works 8 hours per week from her home on a freelance, rather than an employed, basis. 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.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

What's Important To Us...

TEAM VICAR DESIGNATE

WE WOULD LIKE A TEAM VICAR WHO...

- Is excited by the prospect of ministering across a cluster of 4 diverse parishes with 5 churches and who is passionate about and has an understanding of semi-rural, multi-parish ministry.
- Will invigorate growth across the cluster, 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 visible ministry of presence in each community.
- Will be able to engage and interact with people from all walks of life, whether in church, in the village pub, through community organisations or in school.
- Will be sustained by a prayerful life and resourced to help us deepen our faith.
- Is comfortable with a variety of different traditions and styles of worship and will minister with flexibility and sensitivity across our distinctive worshipping communities and has the resilience and energy to manage expectations across the cluster.
- Is a strong preacher who can relate the Gospel to everyday living.
- Will lead, enable, nurture and encourage others in their discipleship, vocations and ministries, valuing and developing 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.
- Will be confident and open in engaging in discussion with people holding different views.
- Enjoys working as part of a team and sharing ministry with others.



TEAM VICAR DESIGNATE CONT'D

PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE BEACON GROUP

- 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 grow our churches younger and revitalise our work with young people, children, families and schools.
- 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.

WE CAN OFFER OUR NEW TEAM VICAR:

- 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.
- The support of a paid Administrator.
- A large and supportive Ministry Team working across the whole benefice.
- Working expenses paid in full.

Thank you for reading our profile. We will be praying for you as you discern whether God might be calling you to come and work among us.

If you would like an information conversation about this role, please contact [Revd Canon Simon Garwood](#) (Acting Team Rector) on [01376 573701](tel:01376573701) or email simongarwood-62@outlook.com

ST. PETER'S GREAT TOTHAM

ST. PETER'S CHURCH IS A BEAUTIFUL, STONE BUILT, 13TH CENTURY BUILDING

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.

WORSHIP

- 2 services are held each Sunday; 10am which includes an increasingly popular Sunday Club and an evensong at 6pm via Zoom
- Tea and coffee are served in the church extension after the 10am service.
- Edward Bear Club (for carers, babies and toddlers) every Thursday morning.
- Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals are held at St Peter's plus many various seasonal services.
- Mothers' Union hold regular 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.

SPIRITUALITY AND NURTURE

- Bible Study Group every Wednesday morning.
- A weekly Sunday Club and regular Confirmation Groups for young people (and adults).

- Each year St Peter's holds a Lent Discussion Group.
- St Peter's, with the support of Great Totham Community Choir, holds a service of Nine lessons and carols each year.
- The C of E Children's Society is supported by two well attended Christingle services.

EVANGELISM AND OUTREACH

- A weekly Knit and Natter group brings in members from the local community.
- St Peter's Tower Bell Ringers ring before the 10am 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 regularly.
- 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 taken to Maldon Fullbridge Church for the Samaritans-Purse.
- Church activities are enthusiastically supported by the wider community.
- 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 10 members. We currently do not have a Churchwarden but do have a PCC 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 – a very enjoyable visit was made by 12 members of our Church last year and we took part in their Sunday service.

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.

[HTTP://FACEBOOK.COM/STPETERSCHURCHGREATTOTHAM](http://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, who will share time fairly between all the parishes in the new Benefice, 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 are in the process of completing a scheme that will allow us to ring our bells again. The support of our parishioners and the local community has already resulted in substantial contributions towards the cost of this.
- As with many Parishes our congregations are largely older people, but because of our constant contact with the wider parish we are able 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.

WORSHIP AND NURTURE

- A priest led BCP 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.
- All Saints has for many years supported three charities: The Cinnamon Trust, Colchester Night Shelter and Next Chapter, a Colchester charity concerned with domestic abuse.
- 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.
- Lent and Advent Courses open to all in the parish are organised and led by the Lay Team and meet in the Restaurant Room of the Swan.

PARISH EVENTS

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 Church 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.

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.
- Frequent Musical Soirees featuring local musicians 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 finalising a project to enable the church bells to ring again after decades of remaining silent, Another part of the project is the repair to our West Door. A fund has been established and we have received grants for this project. Thanks to the generosity of people in our parish we already have contributions which should hopefully pay for this project.

“HOPING THE BELLS WILL RING AGAIN”

SAINT PETER'S GOLDHANGER

GOLDHANGER IS A VERY ACTIVE VILLAGE WITH MANY DIFFERENT CLUBS AND ORGANISATIONS. CHURCH MEMBERS ARE VERY INVOLVED IN THEM ALL.

St Peter's Church, has a pastoral role in the community and runs a full programme of events and services throughout the year. We aim to reach most households in the village through our pattern of church services, our involvement in other village organisations, and the fundraising and social events.

Church members are keen for St Peter's to be at the heart of the community and to be a place of joy and peace where everyone is welcomed. Attendance at Christmas services in 2023 was 95 adults, 47 children plus 87 at the Carol Service. We would love to have this kind of attendance at our regular services.

St. Peter's has a strong Eucharistic liturgical tradition. Vestments are usually worn. The Blessed Sacrament is perpetually reserved. Candles and bells are used in worship and parts of the Parish Communion Service are sung. However, we recognise that our current style of worship may not be attractive to many in the village. We want to explore other service styles.

Children are encouraged to take part in services. We hold a monthly Family Service. We are the only church in the village, and we welcome members of other denominations to worship with us.

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

LAY MINISTRY

We encourage Lay participation in services. We have two Lay Communion Assistants and two authorized local preachers. Other members of the congregation lead intercessions and read the Bible readings.

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).

Music is important in our worship. Our main musical instrument is a two manual Nicholson and Lord pipe organ (restored in 2023). We also have a grand piano that is played at times. When our organist is unable to attend, we use the set of CDs 'No organist, no problem'.

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.



We host a joint service with the Tothams, to mark Sea Sunday at Goldhanger Sailing Club. We actively participate in Benefice services.

ST PETER'S CHURCH

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

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.

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

We run a Stewardship system and an active fundraising programme. Despite the continuing rise in costs our finances are stretched. However, we met our Parish Share in 2025 and aim to do so in the future.

OUTREACH

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

- A weekly social coffee morning is very popular.
- We hold Lent Lunches, a Chinese evening, a Harvest Supper and a Mowers' supper for the community.
- We run summer Table Top sales and sell Tea and Cakes in the churchyard.
- We play an active role in the Goldhanger annual Gala weekend, with the Teddy Bear parachute drop from the church tower being a highlight.
- We organise the biennial Village Open Gardens weekend.
- A village concert is held in the church in December.

“GRADE I LISTED, THE BUILDING ORIGINATES FROM THE 12TH CENTURY”

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S WICKHAM BISHOPS ST NICHOLAS' LITTLE BRAXTED

THE VILLAGE IS A POPULAR PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE AND MUCH SOUGHT-AFTER IN THE PROPERTY MARKET.

Wickham Bishops is an attractive Essex village with a population of around 2,000 people. It is situated two miles from the A12, half way between Chelmsford and Colchester and approximately three miles from the towns of Witham and Maldon. Its location, amenities and accessibility are drawing in new people. It is known as an affluent village with many large homes. However, it maintains a comfortable, mixed community feel, and its legacy of social housing is still being increased as an adjunct to ongoing premium developments.

The village was originally centred around the old St. Peter's Church, now a stained-glass studio, but it gradually moved up to the top of the hill where the present St Bartholomew's Church is situated. Among the considerable range of amenities is a very large, modern Village Hall built in 2006, which together with a large sports field is administered by The Beacon Hill Sports Association. These facilities are used by a number of clubs including a cricket club, football clubs for all ages and a tennis club. There is a small collection of shops and businesses, a public house, and a public library. The church works closely with the OneStop shop, collecting food donations for the Braintree Area Food bank. Tickets for church and community events are distributed through the Health Food shop.

Local children usually attend primary school in nearby Great Totham, with members of the congregation represented on the governing body. There are also several good secondary schools, with school-bus links, in Maldon and Witham.

St Bartholomew's Wickham Bishops is combined with the parish of St. Nicholas, Little Braxted, lying on its northeastern boundary. Little Braxted village has a population of around 175. The village consists mainly of large dwellings, which are surrounded by farmland, and a picturesque mill and fishing lakes. There is a small business centre behind Little Braxted Church. There is a public house, and a residential care home. The church has close connections to the care home, offering Holy Communion and visits to the residents; and good relations with the business centre, holding an annual carol service for the people who work there.

CHURCH BUILDINGS & CHURCH HALL

St. Bartholomew's Church is a Grade II Listed building dating from 1850. The church interior was re-decorated between 2020 and 2024. The lighting was improved and some of the pews were modified to enable better disability access. Within the modified traditional structure, we have created a dedicated welcome area, a prayer and reflection space, and a children's chapel with toys, special seating, and a play carpet.



The hall can be independently accessed from the churchyard.

There is plenty of room to hold services in the hall when the colder months make this an attractive option.

The Churchyard encircles the church. As a graveyard it is now full, but on the opposite side of the road there is a large car-park adjoining an extended graveyard with a Memorial Garden for the burial of ashes. There is still considerable grave space on that site. Much of it is still a Church Field, which is used for outdoor events such as the biennial Open Gardens Festival and Summer Fayre with stalls and games. The War Graves Commission has recognised three graves in the original churchyard, denoted by the usual signage. The maintenance of the church grounds attracts the committed support of the community, not just those who attend the church.

DOING & BEING CHURCH TOGETHER

Currently our Sunday services are an 8am said Holy Communion and 10:30am sung Eucharist service, which is streamed to Facebook, on three out of four weeks. We have a dedicated adult choir affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music and have a strong musical tradition, which plays a vital part in enhancing our worship. Once a month we hold a less formal, non-Eucharistic family worship service in the hall, based on the Service of the Word, and incorporating a blend of more modern music, reflective opportunities, and open prayer. At Christmas an annual service of nine lessons and carols is held, as well as a Crib Service for children and families on Christmas Eve followed by a Midnight Sung Eucharist. At the most important Festival of Holy Week and Easter contemplative services are held and Easter Day itself celebrated often with a Dawn Service.

Other occasional services of various kinds are held during the year. Many members of the congregation contribute to our services, taking part in reading, leading prayers, as sides-people, and by providing refreshments after the main service.

There are two Authorised Local Preachers and several others gifted in speaking and in leading worship. Two fortnightly, lay-led Bible study groups take place. They differ in style, with one being held in the afternoon and the other in an evening.

We are a very sociable bunch. Sharing 'The Peace' can take time, and people do linger over coffee after the service. In the cooler months, we hold a bring-and-share crock-pot lunch after the informal Sunday service which is aimed at those on their own. A large proportion of the congregation joins in with this and non-church members are always welcome.

St Nicholas Church is Grade I Listed and is situated about 2.7 miles from Wickham Bishops on the outskirts of the small village of Little Braxted. The church was largely built in the early part of the 12th century. It has a wooden belfry and two bells, a Norman semi-circular apse, and a wooden porch in the Tudor style. The rustic exterior belies the interior, which is richly furnished. The walls are covered in hand-painted designs, with stencil-work and pictures as well as texts and symbolic devices.

“WE ARE A VERY SOCIABLE BUNCH”



These are the creation of Revd Ernest Geldart who was rector of Little Braxted from 1881 to 1900. An architect by earlier profession, he was a noted authority on church design, and he extended, re-ordered and decorated the church during his time.

St Nicholas' Church is now a chapel of ease, but is licensed for weddings. Services held at St. Nicholas are predominantly in the Anglo-Catholic style. A traditional language Eucharist is offered at 9am on the third Sunday of the month, as well as Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and the Last Hour at the Cross on Good Friday.

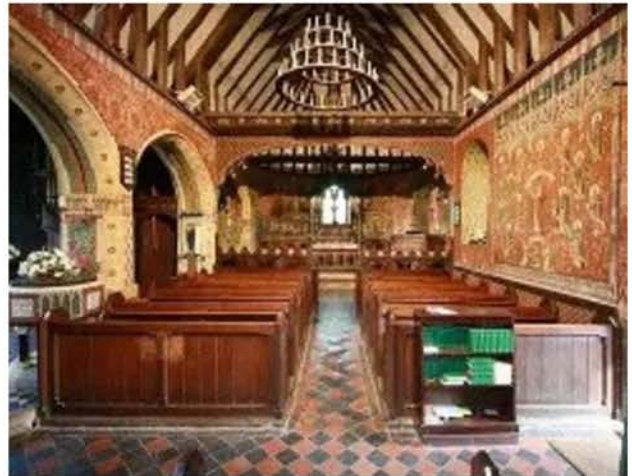
At Christmas a Carol Service is organised through links with the Speakmans, local farmers and owners of Little Braxted Hall, who are good neighbours and friends of the Church. This is primarily aimed at the tenants of the Little Braxted Hall Business Centre behind the Church.

There are other occasional festival services. The church has a seating capacity of about 65. The atmosphere of the interior has to be experienced, and it offers the ideal setting for services in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, or more contemplative styles.

The Electoral Roll of the Parish comprises 74 members resident in the parish and 23 from outside.

Both our churches are open throughout daylight hours and we are privileged to welcome a good number of visitors, particularly to St Nicholas with its charming setting and extraordinary interior.

We recognise the importance of all our congregation, whatever their age, as together we are all the Church! Without our more elderly members church life would be much the poorer. Through their witness and constancy, we hope to be seen as a living vibrant body with a real purpose. We understand the need to encourage and nurture everyone who worships with us and recognise that we all need to be inspired and challenged and sometimes just comforted.



We ensure that members of the congregation who are less mobile are given lifts to church to enable them to attend and enjoy the services.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We recognise the importance of young people in our church not only for the future growth of the church but also to bring vibrancy and balance to our community.

Currently however we do not seem to attract families to our Sunday worship which will be one of the prime areas of focus for the future.

The Edward Bear group runs from 10am - 11.30am on a Monday morning during term time and is open to all babies and pre schoolers. The session incorporates free playtime with various toys and craft activity in the hall. We take the group into the Lady Chapel for singing, prayer and the children can explore the church environment searching for a bear before being blessed by the Vicar. Back in the hall the children listen to a story with a biscuit before more playing and crafting continues. The craft activity and prayer each week link into the community and church calendar.



PASTORAL

We have a Pastoral Assistant visiting people in the community and who also takes communion to the local Care Home. The small but dedicated Pastoral Team also home visit and lend a listening ear to the housebound and bereaved. Harvest Plants are delivered each year to people in the Parish who have been recently bereaved or unwell.

The monthly 'Drop-In' Sessions held in the hall provide refreshments plus friendship and support for all those in the community who can benefit from company and a chat with a friendly face.

Tuesday afternoon Carpet bowls is open to all in the parish, again providing members with companionship and a sociable afternoon.

DISCIPLESHIP

- We have run two successful Alpha courses with good numbers.
- A Women's Christian Fellowship Group meets in the hall on a monthly basis with a full programme of speakers and outings.

PCC AND LEADERSHIP TEAM

The PCC meet five times a year. Meetings are well attended and the atmosphere is informal, friendly and co-operative.



A Standing Committee, comprising the Priest-in-Charge, Churchwardens, Treasurer and PCC Secretary meets a couple of weeks before each PCC meeting to discuss church matters in an informal manner and to put forward the agenda for the following PCC meeting.

We have the benefit of a Priest 'with permission to officiate' who presides once a month at the 10.30 service and is an ex-officio member of the PCC.

Two Deanery Synod Reps attend the Diocesan meetings and report back to the PCC.

LAY COMMITTEES

St Bartholomew's has a number of active committees run by members of the congregation reporting to the PCC. These include Fundraising and Social, Fabric, Finance, Worship and the previously mentioned Pastoral Committee who also organise a soup lunch each year for people in the Parish to attend and oversee the Remembrance Service for the Departed.

FUNDRAISING AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The committee is very active and organises a number of events during the year. Coffee mornings, Summer Fayre, Christmas Gift Fayre, Quiz evenings and theme evenings with a meal and entertainment. Money raised goes towards our general church funds. Furthermore, the committee arranges procurement of a Christmas tree and the decoration of it by the uniformed organisations. The committee also plays a big part in the organisation of the Open Garden Event, in conjunction with "The Guardians" and oversees the catering for various concerts and the carol service, plus the annual Harvest Lunch.

GUARDIANS OF THE VILLAGE CHURCHES

Established a few years ago "The Guardians" falls under the PCC but comprise mainly people from the village (non-churchgoers) who want to see the Church building thrive to be an important resource within the village for multi-use. Their fund-raising events have been a huge contribution to the Church redecoration programme which is now completed. With the absence of an Incumbent the Guardians committee is currently inactive.

In June 2025 the Open Gardens Committee with the Guardians of the Village Churches, organised our biennial Open Gardens Day which was very well supported by the village and provided us with a considerable source of revenue for our Fabric Fund.

THE VICARAGE

We have two clergy houses within our parishes. Candidates will be able to visit both houses as part of the interview process before a decision is made as to which house will be retained.

GREAT TOTHAM

The Vicarage is a four-bedroom purpose-built detached house located in the village of Great Totham. There is a pleasant garden to the rear of the house.



WICKHAM BISHOPS

The Rectory was built in the 1930s and is a five-bedroom detached family home. It is situated adjacent to the church and is set within a large natural garden with fruit trees, garage and ample parking.

The accommodation provides comfortable lounge, dining room and kitchen, all separated from the spacious study and downstairs toilet by an entrance door. The first floor has five bedrooms and a family bathroom with an additional attic space.

The house has central heating throughout that was installed about 8 years ago and the diocese has recently installed solar panels on the roof to provide additional electricity. The windows are doubled glazed and there is security lighting.



SAFEGUARDING

We are committed to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults within our parishes.

The PCCs have adopted the Church Of England's policies and best practice of safeguarding which can be found via www.churchofengland.org/more/safeguarding or www.chelmsford.anglican.org/safeguarding

CENTRE FOR WORSHIP
&
SPIRITUALITY

**THE
BEACON
= GROUP =**