

An Exciting Opportunity to be Part of a New Team Ministry in the Deanery of Witham



Could you be one of the Team Vicars we are looking for?

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 Witham



Revd Canon Simon Garwood, 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.

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



**Revd Anne-Marie Renshaw,
Team Rector Designate**

Thank you for your interest in these exciting new posts 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 Churchwardens 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.

Where have we come from?



We are currently four separate benefices:

Kelvedon and Feering – one full-time Priest-in-Charge who is also our Area Dean, Simon Garwood

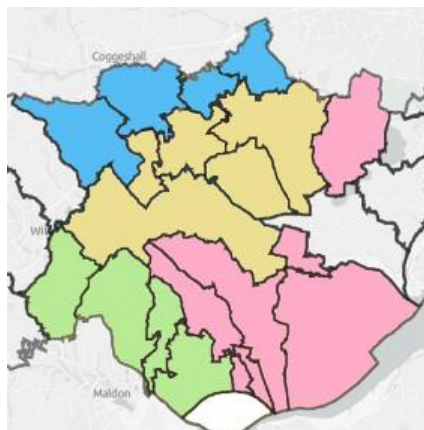
The Thurstable and Winstree Team Ministry – one full-time Team Rector, Anne-Marie Renshaw and one half-time Team Vicar (currently vacant)

The Blackwater Benefice – one full-time Rector (vacant)

Wickham Bishops with Little Braxted – one half-time Vicar (vacant)

Where are we going?

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 Simon Garwood as Team Vicar
2. Yellow - Tiptree with Tolleshunt Knights and Great Braxted, Messing, Inworth, Layer Marney and Layer Breton with Birch – led by Anne-Marie Renshaw as Team Rector
3. Green - Wickham Bishops with Little Braxted, Great Totham, Little Totham and Goldhanger – led by a Team Vicar
4. Pink - Layer de la Haye, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Tolleshunt Major, Tollesbury and Salcott-cum-Virley – led by a Team Vicar

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 one of the two new Team Vicar posts in our benefice?

Please read through the two profiles that follow. 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.

Profile for the Post of Team Vicar Designate of Wickham Bishops with Little Braxted, Great Totham, Little Totham and Goldhanger

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ST. PETER'S GREAT TOTHAM



St. Peter's Church is a beautiful, stone built, 13th century building

St Peter's, Great Totham

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

Worship:

- 2 services are held each Sunday; 10.00 am which includes Sunday Club and an evensong at 6.00pm via Zoom
- Tea & coffee are served in the church extension after the 10.00 am service.
- Edward Bear Club (for carers, babies & toddlers) every Thursday morning.
- Baptisms, Weddings & Funerals are held at St Peter's plus many various seasonal services.
- Mothers' Union hold monthly meetings and members attend MU Deanery meetings.
- Special Services are held at New Year, Easter, Mothering Sunday, Harvest and Christmas including a nativity service, two Christingle services and midnight communion.



Spirituality and Nurture

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



Evangelism and Outreach

- A weekly Knit & 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 annually.
- Regular visits are made to the housebound and Holy Communion is offered where appropriate.
- The Parish Magazine reaches everyone in the village for church activities and village organisations.
- St. Peter's supports the annual 'Friends of Essex Churches' Ride & Stride event.
- Shoe boxes are filled each year by individuals and given via the Rotary Club to Samaritans-Purse.
- Church activities are enthusiastically supported by the wider community.
- A Friends of St Peter's group supports the historic importance of the church.
- Deanery Synod meetings are regularly attended by one or both of our Deanery Synod Reps.
- Parish Share is currently being paid in full.

Our PCC meets approximately 6 times a year and is made up of 11 members. 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 9 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.



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



St Peter's Church runs its own Facebook page:

<https://facebook.com/stpeterschurchgreattotham>

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

Congregation Numbers and Occasional Offices

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

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 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 at least to keep in touch with younger people.

We very much hope that a new Priest will lead and guide in finding ways of being more attractive to younger people in our Church life.

Church Life:

- A priest led BCP Said Eucharist, every Saturday, 5.30pm; A Priest led Parish Communion, 11 am 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: these are not the same every year - examples include:
 - 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 organized and led by the Lay Team and meet in 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 at All Saints

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.

Soon 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.



ST PETER'S CHURCH 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.

Worship

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.

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). 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, (we hope Wickham Bishops will join us) 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. With the continuing rise in costs, most notably energy, our finances are stretched and we have been unable to meet, in full, our Parish Share. In 2025 we hope to get closer, if not pay it in full.

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.



The Parish of St Bartholomew, Wickham Bishops and St Nicholas, Little Braxted



St. Nicholas Church Little Braxted CM8 3EU

www.churchinwickhambishops.org.uk

www.facebook.com/groups/102876926507855/

The Villages of Wickham Bishops and Little Braxted

Wickham Bishops is an attractive Essex village with a population of around 2,000 people situated two miles from the A12, halfway between Chelmsford and Colchester and approximately three miles from the towns of Witham and Maldon. Although there is evidence of Roman occupation, Wickham was still a very small manor at the time of the Domesday Book of 1086 and belonged to the Bishops of London. It was originally centred around the old St. Peter's Church, but gradually moved up to the top of the hill and the present St Bartholomew's Church was built by the Leigh family in 1850.

The village is built along a ridge full of springs 250 ft above the Blackwater Estuary and surrounded by some beautiful woods. It is residential and also an agricultural community.

The village is a popular place in which to live and much sought-after in the property market. Houses are mainly detached and owner-occupied with some small cottages and two small council developments. There have been further developments in the past 8 years – which included social housing.

Wickham Bishops enjoys good amenities and boasts a large, modern Village Hall in the centre of the village built in 2006 that won a Design Award from Maldon District Council in 2008. The Village Hall is used by many clubs and societies and has a Children's Playground within its grounds.

A nearby related site provides 17-acre sports field with a cricket club, football teams ranging from 6yrs to veterans and a popular tennis club with four floodlit courts on the south-eastern edge of the village, run by the Beacon Hill Sports Association.

Also, in the centre of the village is a 'One Stop' General Store with Post Office, both open 7 days a week from early morning to 10pm. The church works closely with the shop in collecting food donations for the Braintree Area Foodbank. There is also a Kitchen design studio, Health Food Shop, Two Beauty Treatment Salons, Vehicle Repair Garage and Car Showroom. A former pub is now an upmarket tea room. Elsewhere, but still within the village, there is an Estate Agent, two hairdressers and a village pub currently undergoing refurbishment. There is also a small public library open three half days a week – which hosts several evening clubs i.e. Computer, Ancestry, Bridge etc.

On weekdays there is a half-hourly bus service between Maldon and Witham and four trains an hour from Witham, south to Chelmsford, Stratford and London Liverpool Street and north to Colchester, Clacton, Ipswich and Norwich.

Local Schools. There is a thriving nursery school at Wickham Bishops Village Hall and a Primary School in Great Totham with a “good” Ofsted report with which the church has opportunity for links www.greattotham.essex.sch.uk. The nearest secondary schools with bus links are The Plume School in Maldon also with a “good” Ofsted report and the Maltings Academy in Witham. There are also Grammar Schools in Chelmsford and Colchester and also various private schools.

Little Braxted lies on the NE boundary with Wickham Bishops and has a population of around 175. Most of Little Braxted village consists of arable farmland and mainly large dwellings houses. Adjoined to the former Little Braxted Rectory is a small chapel which is used occasionally for midweek communion. There is one public house serving food and a privately run residential Care Home which the church has close connections with and offers Holy Communion and visits to the residents. There is a small business centre behind Little Braxted Church.

The villages are very popular for commuting to London and other neighbouring towns. The village enjoys strong WIFI and has a mobile mast (especially good if you are with O2).

Bordering with Great Totham, Wickham Bishops is home to Maldon and East Essex District Scouts Activity Centre and large modern hall with all facilities.



Church Buildings and Church Hall

St Bartholomew's Church is Grade II Listed and a fine example of Victorian Gothic architecture. You can read about its history and design on our website.

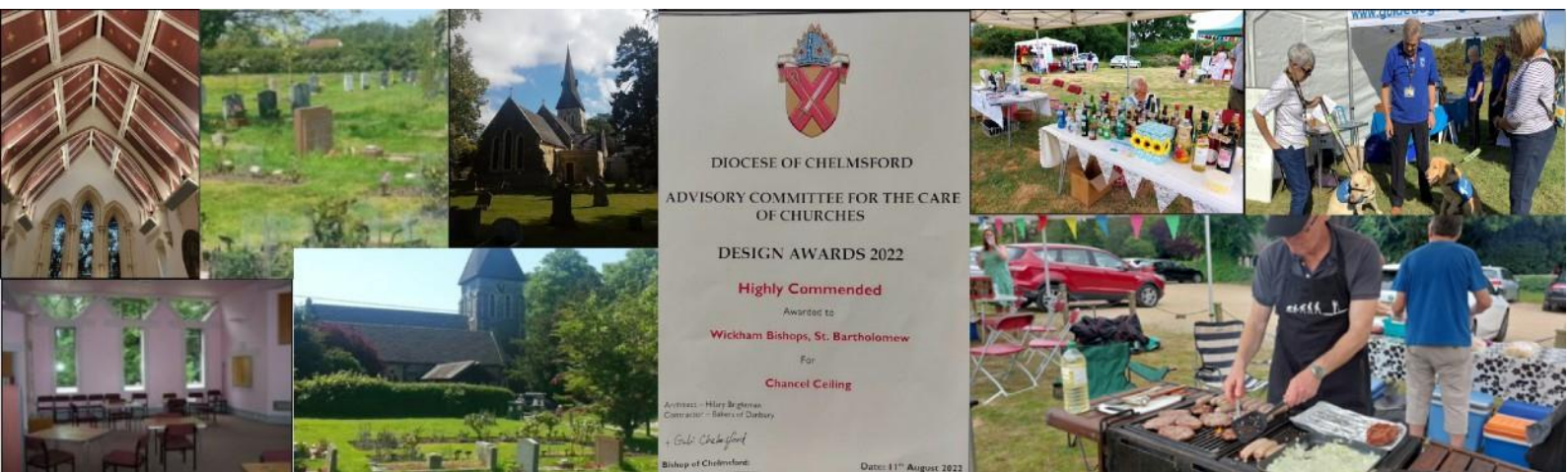
We have recently re-decorated the interior of the church and have modified some of the pews to enable better disability access. We now have more flexible space, a dedicated welcome, prayer and reflection area and a children's chapel space.

The Church Hall is situated behind the church and includes a modern kitchen, toilets and generous entrance way.

It is used regularly by church, village and local organisations as well as for less formal services at least once a month.

The Churchyard around the church has graves and an extended graveyard opposite the church with a Memorial Garden for the burial of ashes. The churchyard is maintained, grass mown and hedges trimmed by a rota of volunteers including our dedicated volunteer sexton. Another member of the congregation takes on the leadership and ensures equipment is regularly maintained. I

The currently unused part of the graveyard is used as the Church Field which is used for outdoor events such as the Open Gardens Festival day and biennial Summer Fayre with stalls and games.



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 built in the early part of the 12th century. It has a wooden belfry and two bells, a Norman semicircular apsis and wooden porch in the Tudor style. The simple exterior belies the interior which is richly furnished and decorated throughout with stencil-work and pictures as well as texts and symbolic devices.

St Nicholas' Church has a Catholic style of worship and is now a chapel of ease, but is licensed for weddings. A traditional language Eucharist service is held at St Nicholas 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 and other occasional festival services. The church has a seating capacity of about 65.

Both our churches are open throughout daylight hours and we are privileged to welcome a good number of visitors, particularly to St Nicholas in Little Braxted with its beautiful and unusual wall decorations.

What is Important to us

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. We would like to be able to attract more families to our Sunday worship.

The Edward Bear group runs from 10.00 to 11.30 am on a Monday morning during term time and is open to all babies and preschoolers. The session incorporates free playtime with various toys and a 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.

See their Facebook page www.facebook.com/groups/201924600870/ for more information

Music

We are very glad that we are able to maintain a musical tradition at St Bartholomew's.

Music plays a vital part in enhancing our worship and also provides a place for people to use their gifts of singing and playing an instrument. The choir is small in number, but enthusiastic, and is affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM).

With the assistance of a rota of organists, some of whom take choir practice, the Parish is able to have a sung Eucharist every week, except on third Sundays when we hold a more informal service in the hall. This is accompanied by acoustic guitars together with recorded music.

For several years now we have provided a service of Choral Evensong to mark RSCM's Music Sunday. At Christmas we have provided a service of Nine Lessons and Carols. Furthermore, on a number of occasions we have provided a choir for the Patronal Festival service at St Nicholas.

These are all aspects of worship which we are keen to continue. Once a new priest is licensed we will endeavour to recruit a permanent Organist and Choir Director.

The Church Family

In 2025 the **Electoral Roll** listed 74 Residents and 23 Non-Residents.

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.

The congregation is very much involved with being part of church services in terms of reading, prayers, music and sides-people as well as providing refreshments after the main service. There is a good proactive attitude amongst members of the congregation and nearly all who are able are willing, and do participate in the various rotas.

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.

Following the third Sunday service in the winter months, we have a "Crock Pot" shared lunch which is very well attended by members of the congregation and non-church members are always welcome

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 bereaves 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 currently have two Bible study groups meeting, one being an evening session and the other in the afternoon - both lay led and held fortnightly.
- 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 currently have four Authorised Local Preachers.

We also 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.

Fund Raising 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" fall 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 and whose 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.

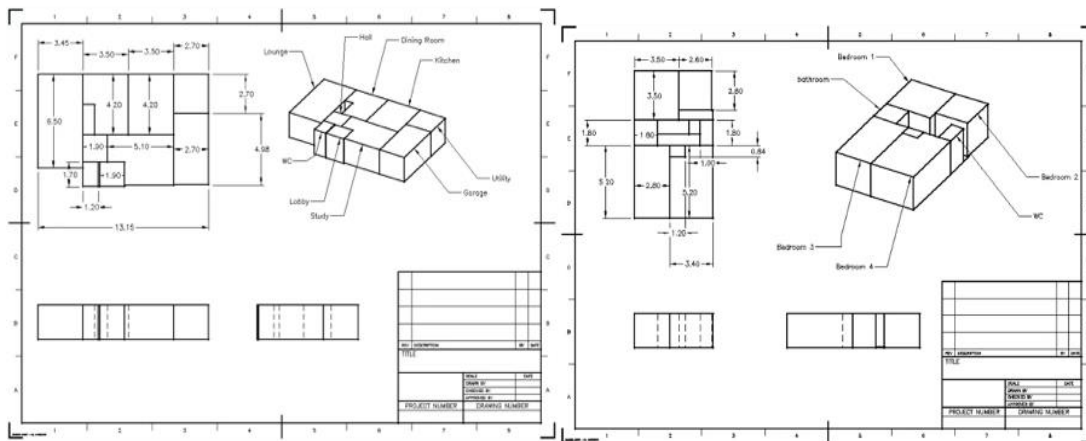
In June 2023 the Open Gardens Committee with the Guardians of the Village Churches, organised our biennial Open Gardens Day which was very well supported by the village and provided us with a considerable source of revenue for our Fabric Fund. This event is being repeated in 2025 with a preceding Scarecrow Trail.

The Vicarage

The new Team Vicar will be able to choose between two vicarages in this cluster of parishes.

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.

Who are we looking for as the Team Vicar Designate of Wickham Bishops with Little Braxted, Great Totham, Little Totham and Goldhanger?

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

Priorities and Challenges for our Churches:

- 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 informal conversation with our Team Rector Designate, Revd Anne-Marie Renshaw, please get in touch on 01621 815260 or by email to amlrenshaw@btinternet.com.

Profile for the Post of Team Vicar Designate of Laye de la Haye, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Tolleshunt Major, Tollesbury and Salcott-cum-Virley

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Parish Nursing Ministry

In the parishes of Tolleshunt Major, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Tollesbury and Salcott-cum-Virley we have an established Parish Nursing Service, offering mental health support and spiritual care to those of all faiths and none. The Parish Nurse/PN Service Lead and Parish Nurse Assistants willingly, as part of their ministry, work as unpaid volunteers. One of our local members (a qualified nurse and health visitor) trained as a Parish Nurse and commenced in post following her Affirmation service held in St Nicholas Church, Tolleshunt Major, led by Bishop Roger in 2019. She is a member of the ministry team and has two Parish Nurse Assistants. The Service is governed by all four parishes via a steering group. Subject to the required approvals, the vision is to extend the current provision to cover all our five parishes, to include Layer de la Haye, and develop the service further once two Parish Nurse Assistants and another Parish Nurse are recruited and trained.



Parish Profile - Layer de la Haye - St John the Baptist Church



Layer de la Haye is a picturesque village situated on the south side of Colchester. The village is 4 miles south of Colchester City Centre. The roads into the city are good and provide relatively easy access to the city's shops, amenities, and its public transport connections, including a good, frequent main-line service to London. There is an hourly bus service into the city on weekday mornings, with a similar return service in the afternoons. There is easy access via rural roads with views of natural beauty along the 3-mile route to an out-of-town retail park. The park contains a large supermarket and many very popular stores. Other shopping outlets are within easy reach on this side of Colchester.

St John the Baptist Church sits in a rural location between farmland and the Abberton Reservoir. The first written record of St John the Baptist church is found in a charter of 1128 and with its proximity to Colchester it is perhaps, not surprising that Roman brick has been used extensively in the construction of the chancel and tower. Over the years the church building has been extended and improved giving easy disabled access and refreshment making facilities. The churchyard is maintained by a willing band of volunteers, which regularly attracts favourable comments from the many visitors seeking to take advantage of the outstanding views over the reservoir and surrounding countryside. Benches are strategically placed around the area in memory of loved ones to facilitate the peace and serenity only a well-kept churchyard provides. Views from the top of the church tower can only be described as spectacular. The bells are regularly rung to welcome parishioners to church services.

Abberton Reservoir is one of Europe's top wetland sites. A major re-construction of the reservoir was started in 2006 lasting 7 years whereby the capacity of the reservoir was considerably increased. Although access to the whole 17-mile circumference cannot be reached on foot, there are many footpaths providing spectacular views. A New Wildlife Centre, managed by Essex Wildlife Trust was built, welcoming visitors, providing a shop, a café and access to a nature reserve with scenic views and the opportunity to observe the many woodland birds and waterfowl the area attracts.



Layer de la Haye is a popular village of some 2000 people, many with young families with a range of local facilities including two public houses, a shop, primary school, village hall, recreation field and children's play area. There are also many public footpaths and bridleways through the local woodland and the surrounding countryside. The village is growing and we currently have two new housing developments under construction, one larger than the other. The larger development will be providing a variety of properties including many affordable homes for first time buyers. A large Solar Farm has been constructed, which will provide vital renewable energy to thousands of homes. Layer de la Haye is a very desirable place to live, houses, when they come on the market are always sold quickly; many of the local population are long-term residents.

The Church is well used, it has close links with the community, and particularly the local primary school, where the church plays an active part in the school leavers services each year as well as events at Christmas, Easter, and Harvest. The children visit the church on a regular basis and the regular congregation are delighted to have the children taking part in our services. During a typical month at St John the Baptist will hold two services of Holy Communion, a service of Morning Praise and a Family or All-age Service on the first Sunday of each month, the service is led by a member of the ministry team assisted by a small team from the congregation. All services are held at 10:30 a.m.

The village amenities cater for every age-group from JB Tots, a baby and toddler group, a very active Pre-School, held daily in the village hall to a senior citizens group of Good Companions. There is also a community choir, aptly called Village Voices. The many other regular village activities include Cubs, Scouts, Badminton, Tennis, Football, Tai Chi, Pilates, Layer Ladies, a gardening club, which hosts a yearly Spring Show and a very active Short-Mat Bowls Club which meets weekly in the Village Hall. There is also good cooperation between neighbouring villages, and this is emphasised by the Mother's Union combining with a larger group. A Parish Magazine is produced monthly giving important local information to the community. The Manager, Editor and all the distributors are volunteers keeping production costs to a minimum. This valuable community resource is a lifeline to many elderly residents. The community spirit is the heart of a vibrant village.



The playing field in the centre of the village is a valuable open space with many uses. Layer Colts and other football teams regularly use the field for matches. A hard surface basketball court is available for the young people to use. A shelter was erected for the young people of the village to congregate in times of inclement weather. In the corner of the field nearest the Village Halls a variety of play equipment has been provided for younger children with seating strategically placed for parental supervision.

The field is also used for Village Fetes, Open-Air Band Concerts and other local and National Celebratory Events. The next one, due in May is for the 80th Anniversary of VE Day. Further along Church Road, towards the Church there are two Tennis Courts for village use. Once a week the tennis nets are removed and the space is used for Walking Football. The area can be floodlit making it a very popular facility and the walking footballers affectionally call this venue the 'Layerdrome!' During the summer months Walking Cricket is played.

Every year at Easter the Friends of Layer School organise an Easter Egg Hunt around the village and Chest Wood. This is a very popular event attracting hundreds of visitors. The event raises a lot of money for the school's extra-curricular activities and other charitable causes.

A lot goes on in this village community. This profile would not be complete if there were not a tribute to the many volunteers who, not only provide their time, expertise and their community spirit making all these activities possible.

The PCC and regular members of the congregation are very excited and encouraged by the creation of this new group of churches. The diversity between these parishes is a tremendous and inviting opportunity for the right candidate to work and support our spiritual needs and live in this very desirable area.



The community spirit is the heart of a vibrant village



ST. NICHOLAS TOLLESHUNT D'ARCY (Home of the D'Arcy Spice Apple)



Tolleshunt D'Arcy is situated at the junction of roads from Colchester, Maldon and Tiptree with three regular bus services from Tollesbury through the village to all these destinations and also on to Witham which has a main train line to London. At the heart of the village is the church, vicarage, the Queens Head pub, the shop and the primary school. Other facilities are the village hall which has a part time Post office and Village larder, a popular Indian Restaurant and a large recreation ground where the well supported annual village fete and horticultural show are held. The parish stretches from the outskirts of Tiptree down to the Blackwater Estuary, has approximately 450 houses and flats including some social housing and remote farmhouses and 1200+ inhabitants who span all ages

St Nicholas' Church sits prominently within the village with a car park alongside. It has a side chapel behind a glazed arch which provides a safe area for children to use during services and is available for meetings. There is also a coffee/tea making area and a toilet. Currently there are communion services on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month using the Common Worship order of prayer and a regular Wednesday 10am communion (BCP) in the side chapel. We have a remarkable organ which was fully refurbished and rebuilt in 2020 and are blessed with a dedicated organist - hymns are traditional and modern. Attracting the younger generation isn't easy but we pray for help and guidance for the future. Although Grade 1 listed, being built 1380-1420, the latest Quinquennial report shows that the building is generally in good condition. The Chancel roof tiles need to be rehung and we have this in hand for the autumn 2025. This will be paid for out of our funds but we are applying for some financial support. The peal of six bells is currently out of commission due to the damaged steel frame and, as the cost of repairs is estimated over £100k, we are looking for substantial help with funding the repair project and also investigating lower cost ways of ringing the bells. We have support from volunteers for flower arranging and cleaning. Recently we have been given the full use of a large garden accessed through the churchyard where our annual and very popular Strawberry Teas are held. This gives the possibility of holding more outdoor events which we would like to investigate. As part of our mission to tackle social exclusion and loneliness there is a monthly parish lunch in the pub and at Christmas a lively concert in the church and carol singing at the pub.

St Nicholas VA Primary School, a member of a Multi Academy Trust serving the village and surrounding area, currently has 100+ pupils. There are plans for the number of classes to grow from 4 to 5 in the next academic year. Its instrument of governance allows for the incumbent to be a member of the Board of Governors and additionally there is a PCC representative. A weekly assembly is led by a member of the Ministry team. The children visit the church once or twice a term to participate in their own prearranged services. This is an area we would dearly love to expand on.

Our Ministry Team who supports our work with enthusiasm and dedication is greatly appreciated. With prayer and effort our hope is to make life better for people in Tolleshunt D'Arcy through the comfort which faith brings. Following several years of change we look forward to a period of stability when our efforts can be directed to growing the church within our own and the wider community.



ST. NICHOLAS' TOLLESHUNT MAJOR



Tolleshunt Major is a small rural village with no school, shop or public transport. There is a very attractive and well supported pub situated in the village centre.

Our beautiful Grade 1 listed Church sits on top of a slight hill on the outskirts of the village boundary, with wonderful views looking out towards the Blackwater estuary. St. Nicholas is a 12th century building with 15th and 16th century alterations and additions including a red Tudor brick tower.

More than 2 years ago, Café Church was established with great success, attracting children, young people, and adults of all ages. This informal service is held in St Nicholas Village Hall rather than the Church itself (due to the lack of facilities), and to help keep heating costs to a minimum. We have an average of 18 people who come to Café Church (compared to 9 on our service on the 3rd Sunday).

Our annual Christmas Eve Christingle service, held in the Church, attracted over 70 people in 2024, including many from our farming communities.

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

Parish Activities

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

The Parochial Church Council

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

ST. MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH TOLLESBURY



Tollesbury Village

Tollesbury is the second largest village within this cluster. Tollesbury has a mix of population, families and very active retired people. It nestles on the north shore of the river Blackwater estuary. It is a self-sufficient community supporting several local shops.

Within the last two years a small group of villagers, with the help of the local Congregational Church have set up a Village larder. The larder is open on a Monday morning for three hours and welcomes anyone to come and help themselves to whatever is on the shelves, offering a cup of coffee and cake too. This village is a special place with a big heart.

Church

Our church lies in the square at the heart of the village. It is a well-maintained Grade 2* listed building dating from the 11th Century and is open daily. Last year it was awarded a silver eco-award.

Our Worship

1st Sunday 9.30am Communion

2nd Sunday 9.00am Communion and 10.30am Informal Worship when possible

3rd Sunday 9.30am Morning Prayer

4th Sunday 9.30am Communion and Messy Church which is held in the Congregational Church

5th Sunday Benefice Service, shared between churches within the benefice therefore venue and time variable.

Monday during term time: Edward Bear Club

Tuesday Morning Prayer Group

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

Special Services

Each year we host the Royal British Legion for their Service of Remembrance. This service is held outside allowing many villagers to partake. The service attracts well over 200 people. The Royal British Legion also uphold other anniversaries with a service around the war memorial, which is in front of the church. We are in the process of arranging the 80 years VE day celebration service.

Parish Life

We have 63 members on the Electoral Roll. The PCC is very active in the life of the church but in recent years we have struggled to encourage a full PCC membership, those who are members are very willing to partake in the running of the church or fundraising. Currently we have a vacancy for a churchwarden. We have an active fundraising group ensuring we meet our financial obligations annually, including full payment of the Parish Share. Further to this the parish church has been supported for many years by a well-established Friends group, raising to date £71,000 to maintain the fabric of the church. Advertising space and the cover cost of our Parish Magazine also produces a sizeable income.

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

Working with Fellow Christians

We have a good relationship with the Congregational Church in the village, joining together for joint services. Together we run 'Fizzers' a thriving after school Christian club for years 1-6 currently, in the school hall, a lively monthly Messy Church and when possible, a Holiday club. Although not associated with St. Mary's, but with the Congregational Church, there is a very active and well attended Youth Group. Also moored in the Blackwater at Tollesbury is the FACT Lightship. Although FACT is not associated with the Team Ministry you may wish to see what it has to offer the website is: <https://www.fact.org.uk>.

St Mary's, the Congregational and the smaller Roman Catholic communities share the hosting of several services throughout the year which are usually well attended.

School

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

Our Vision

To grow our church

To work more closely with the churches within our cluster

To increase the number of children and young adults in our church family

To make Christ more visible in Tollesbury

To develop a pastoral care team

For our Team Vicar to be visible in our village



THE PARISH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, SALCOTT CUM VIRLEY



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

The Grade 2* Listed church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, is in the centre of the village and dates from the 13th century. Although the main building was damaged by the Essex earthquake, the flint tower remained intact; the nave was extensively restored and the chancel rebuilt. It has been well maintained over the years.

The church is valued locally for its peaceful and simple interior and for the well-kept appearance of its churchyard.

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

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

Salcott cum Virley Village

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

The village has no local shops or pub and relies on volunteers to create places where residents can meet.

The village hall is leased by the diocese to an independent charity, having been converted from the old school. It hosts a playgroup, clubs for children aged 7 years and over, an art group and parish council meetings; and it is also a venue for the monthly parish Sunday Lunch and the coffee mornings run by the Friends of St Mary's. It is a welcome and valued place for parties, meetings and other local events.

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

The population is currently around 400 but this may increase slightly due to development.

Business and Leisure

Farming is the primary industry within the area, although there are also hotels and sports centres. Commuting to Colchester and London is also common.

The village is close to a number of wildlife reserves owned by the Essex Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and the RSPB. Walkers and birdwatchers are increasingly present as visitors. The area is extremely popular for sailing and other water sports, including fishing.

Parish Life

The PCC. meets every 2 months; the day-to-day oversight of the parish is by the PCC standing committee. PCC members take responsibility for fundraising, cleaning, garden and building maintenance. Individual parishioners also provide a constant supply of flower arrangements in the church.

The PCC pays for the organist, the grass cutting contractor and any other casual work as required. The greatest charge on general funds is the parish share which we, sadly, have struggled to pay in recent years. Church finances are constantly under review, the treasurer ensuring that VAT and gift aid donations are reclaimed on a regular basis. A small group, the Friends of St Mary's, runs monthly coffee mornings, the funds from which are directed to the costs of the planned toilet. There is also an annual Christmas Tree Festival.

Church Attendance

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

Children's Ministry, Schools and Education

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

Local secondary provision is at Thurstable school in Tiptree 4½ miles away. There is a school bus service. The school is well regarded and has a good academic record. The area is also served by grammar schools in Colchester.

Children are particularly encouraged to join us at Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday and Christmas Services.

The annual Christmas Eve services, "Instant Nativity – Just Add Children" are particularly well attended. The informal seating and reading areas at the tower end of the church are available to both young and old. All are encouraged to use it and make use of the well-established coffee point.

The Future

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

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

We aim to look outwards
Hearing and learning from the voices of the people around us
Opening the doors to those who come
Seeking those who are lost
Bringing the living presence of Christ to our village



The Vicarage

The new Team Vicar will be able to choose between two vicarages in this cluster of parishes

Layer de la Haye Vicarage

The vicarage is situated centrally in the village of Layer de la Haye and has four bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs with dining room, sitting room, study, cloakroom, well-fitted kitchen and a small utility room downstairs. It has gas-fired central heating and a number of solar panels. There is a double garage and good-sized gardens with lawns to the front and rear of the property.



Who are we looking for as the Team Vicar Designate of Layer de la Haye, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Tolleshunt Major, Tollesbury and Salcott-cum-Virley?

We are seeking a compassionate, dedicated, and spiritually grounded individual to serve as the new Team Vicar in a vibrant rural community with a rich heritage and strong ties to the local area. The ideal candidate will be committed to nurturing the faith of both existing members and newcomers, fostering community engagement, and leading the parish in worship, service, and outreach.

As the Team Vicar, you will be at the heart of our parish life, providing spiritual leadership and care to the congregation, as well as offering pastoral support to our rural community. You will work alongside a committed team of lay leaders, volunteers, and the local community to inspire and develop faith and ministry in this beautiful rural setting.

We would like a Team Vicar who:

- is friendly, kind, approachable and proactive
- loves working with schools and will nurture the three primary schools in our parishes (two are Church of England schools)
- will be a visible presence in each of our villages and will contribute to the life of the local community
- is a creative leader, willing to work with our PCCs to shape the future of our churches
- is equally comfortable with the very young and the more advanced in years
- is an engaging preacher, comfortable with traditional worship and contemporary family-friendly services
- enjoys working as part of a team and sharing ministry with others

We can offer our new Team Vicar:

- an opportunity to be part of creating a new Team Ministry and helping us grow together as parishes
- the support and experience of our large Ministry Team, Team Council and PCCs
- opportunities you can build on
- strong relationships with community groups
- the support of a paid administrator
- working expenses paid in full
- our friendship and our prayers

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 informal conversation with our Team Rector Designate, Revd Anne-Marie Renshaw, please get in touch on 01621 815260 or by email to amlrenshaw@btinternet.com.