



# HELP TO SPREAD THE WORD OF GOD IN RURAL ESSEX!



**A BENEFICE PROFILE FOR  
THE CHURCHES OF  
THAXTED,  
THE SAMPFORDS,  
RADWINTER AND  
HEMPSTEAD**

## THE DIOCESE: A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP GULI



Covering Essex and East London, Chelmsford is one of the largest, most diverse and exciting dioceses in the Church of England. We are home to more than 3 million people representing many socio-economic, ethnic and faith groups and a fantastic variety of cultures and traditions.

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

My sense is that the whole Church of God is in a liminal season when we cannot clearly see the future and so don't quite know what it will look like. But we know that the Church has faced profound challenges in the past and as we look to the future we do so with faith that when we open ourselves up to being changed and transformed, we are best placed to serve God and God's people.

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

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

Since I became Bishop of Chelmsford, I have witnessed people's great warmth and I have seen first hand, the wonderful things going on in our parishes. Any new priest joining us in the Diocese of Chelmsford does so at a time of challenge, a time of change and most significantly a time of hope for our Church in this most diverse and exciting of dioceses.

**+Guli**

**Bishop of Chelmsford**

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



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

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Through the power of the Holy Spirit our mission is to present Jesus in life and work in ways that all will be led to know him and to follow him.

It's about being open to all, welcoming and inclusive. Our benefice seeks to affirm liberal Christian perspectives while maintaining the traditions and liturgy culturally associated with Anglo-Catholicism. Although there is diversity across the Benefice we all enjoy and value our liberal theology and roots in social justice.

## **THE BENEFICE**

<https://www.ttsrh.org/>

We are excited to be seeking a new Rector to lead our Benefice of four Parishes with five churches. If you are called to join us, we can offer you wonderful opportunities to minister to a vibrant rural area, with a mixture of large and small churches, in beautiful North West Essex.

Our committed church communities are seeking to build and spread the word of the Lord. We see tremendous opportunities for growth, taking advantage of the expansion of all our communities, against a backdrop of committed and supportive congregations. If you feel that you, backed by our strong ministry team, can help us on the next stage of our Benefice journey, please take some time to read all about us – and you would be welcome to come and visit us to experience all that we have to offer for you and your spiritual journey.

## **THE BROADER CONTEXT**

Our Benefice is situated in the NW corner of the county of Essex within the District Council of Uttlesford. It forms a key part of the Saffron Walden Deanery and is in the Colchester Episcopal area in the Diocese of Chelmsford. The Benefice, as now constituted, was formed in June 2017 by joining the Parish of Thaxted with the existing Benefice of The Sampfords with Radwinter and Hempstead (collectively known as The Villages).

Across our Benefice we benefit from a rich and diverse church tradition. Thaxted has a strong Anglo-Catholic identity, whereas Radwinter has become more 'middle-of-the-road Anglican' in recent years, and as such, similar to the tradition of the other three 'village' churches. Nonetheless our congregations are inclusive, mingle freely and join each other in worship, with the varying traditions respected and our shared values adding to the richness of our Benefice witness.

## **PATRONAGE AND DEANERY SUPPORT**

Jeremy Trew, our Area Dean says:

“Thank you for taking the time to read this profile. This Benefice is part of the Saffron Walden Deanery within the Diocese of Chelmsford. As a Deanery and Chapter we seek to support one another as we seek to reveal God's Kingdom in this time and place. These times are challenging, as we emerge into the uncertainty of a post-COVID Church, but these places are usually rewarding. Saffron Walden Deanery is blessed with a diverse range of Church communities served by a great range of people through ministries both lay and ordained. Together, we have faced and met the challenge of Diocesan targets for clergy numbers, and are now planning strategically so that support and resources are shared well across the Deanery, enabling the local Church to flourish. If you join us, we promise that you will not labour in isolation, but as part of a supportive and prayerful Christian community. My best wishes to you as you discern your future with us.”

The Patrons are the Bishop of Chelmsford, New College Oxford, Keble College Oxford and the Guild of All Souls. The right of presentation, which had been suspended because of pastoral reorganisation, has now been restored.

## **OUR NEW RECTOR**

The Benefice does not have any Resolutions in place and we welcome all applications. We are seeking and praying for:

- a liberal Anglo Catholic Rector who will embrace and enjoy a broad church tradition and uphold the variations that exist across the Benefice;
- is committed to rural ministry and understands the opportunities that it brings, especially in our Benefice;
- will engage with our whole community, young as well as old, bringing the word of God to those in and outside the church;
- will bring energy and fresh ideas, helping us to build on what has already been achieved and encouraging growth in our congregations;
- will enthusiastically embrace their role as a Governor of Radwinter Church School, and be a visible presence in the life of our other local primary schools, engaging with our young people and families presenting church life in an uplifting and accessible way;
- has strong pastoral skills and a desire to reach out into our wider community;
- will lead and take a share in a vigorous visiting ministry;
- is a good confessor for those who require it;
- appreciates and supports the strong musical and cultural traditions that exist throughout our communities and especially at Thaxted;
- is keen to encourage the emergence of lay talents and the empowering of lay leadership;
- will restore the Ministry of Healing and has a pastoral heart.

We know this list is something of a tall order! We have therefore identified four immediate priorities:

- **Demonstrate commitment to rural ministry by re-establishing and building on the presence of our churches in their communities;**
- **Bring energy and fresh ideas, helping us to build on what has already been achieved and encouraging growth in our congregations;**
- **Welcome children to services, and become a visible presence in the life of our local primary schools, embracing their role as a Governor of Radwinter Church School;**
- **Help us to continue our journey to improve cooperation between our constituent Parishes, seeking opportunities to identify efficiencies and resolve existing issues.**

If you feel that you might be able to help us achieve some of what we seek, you can be reassured that there is a great team already in place to work alongside you, pray for you and support you.

## THE MINISTRY TEAM

Our Benefice is deeply fortunate to have a strong existing team of four, ready and looking forward to welcoming our new incumbent. Sharing the burden, providing support and helping to ensure a smooth start and continued assistance, we have:

- **Revd Susannah Lacon** SCP, PTO
- **Revd Christopher Brown**, PTO
- **Adrian Wright**, Reader
- **Canon Graham Cook**, Authorised Lay Preacher with permission to lead worship and conduct funerals



## THE VICARAGE

We understand the importance of a pleasant and secure base within our Benefice. We are able to offer a substantial Vicarage, just a hundred yards away from Thaxted church. Built in 1974, it is a very comfortable five-bedroomed detached house with beautiful views over the Chelmer valley.

The Vicarage benefits from easy access to the weekly market that is held in Thaxted. Thaxted Surgery provides general practice healthcare, and the Thaxted Centre for the Disabled supports persons with physical disabilities through volunteers.



Thaxted is well connected, with the M11 only 20 minutes away, fast trains to London from Bishops Stortford (12 miles) and international air and rail travel from Stansted Airport.

## GOVERNANCE

Our Benefice is still in its infancy, having been created in 2017. During the previous incumbency we restarted the process of streamlining the governance of the Benefice, with a cross-Benefice working party being established charged with producing proposals for new Governance structures that will remove administrative burdens, speed up decision making, and help us to spend more time on our pastoral mission. A highly successful initial meeting was held which we see as the start of an important journey, with the ultimate goal of having more time for the things that really matter to our Ministry Team, our congregations and the wider community.

## ADMINISTRATION

We do not want our new incumbent to become buried under the administrative burden of the Benefice! To enable our new Rector to focus on their ministry, we appointed a Benefice Administrator, charged with handling the paperwork and freeing our Rector to undertake their pastoral mission. The Administrator is self-employed, and it was agreed that each part of the benefice would contribute to her fee. She is willing to modify her periods of work for us to meet the needs of the new incumbent.

## THE SERVICE PATTERN

Patterns of worship differ somewhat between Thaxted and 'the Villages', the legacy of the way in which the Benefice came together in 2017. Some unification has gradually been achieved, with all five churches using a similar Liturgy and the same Hymn Book, but there is more to be achieved.

Thaxted has had a long Anglo-Catholic tradition whereas the Villages tend to be more middle-of-the-road. The Village's congregation is a travelling one as their services move around their various churches and enjoy the benefits of worshipping together in our different traditions. Work remains to be done to help everyone to be comfortable, but huge progress has already been made and we are confident that our Church life has been enriched by the process of coming together. In addition to the normal service pattern, we hold activities such as Lent Suppers and Lent groups, each open to the whole Benefice.

### Thaxted



*Plough Sunday at Thaxted*

Thaxted Parish church has a small team of servers and a number of chalice assistants. There is a reliable team of readers, intercessors and sidespersons.

Under the previous incumbent, Thaxted was able to provide an 8am Said Mass and an 11am Sung Mass on Sundays, a 10am Said Mass on Wednesdays and other ad hoc services marking key Saints' Days or other important dates in the Church calendar.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month we celebrate Mass at 10am with 'Open Doors', an all age service open to everyone which actively involves families, those who wish to access Eucharist worship in a more informal way and those coming to church for the first time.

There are a number of special services throughout the year:

With the Benefice situated at the heart of a rural community, **Plough Sunday** is a major diocesan-wide event, centred on Thaxted Church. Over many years, the service has been supported by a parade of tractors and the Thaxted Morris

Men in their traditional role. Luckily there is no requirement for our new incumbent to be able to dance along (or indeed to drive a tractor)!

As in the Villages, the **Remembrance Sunday service** is well supported in Thaxted with attendance of more than 400 people in some years. We have strong links with the local Royal British Legion, local uniformed youth groups and the Army at Carver Barracks.

The **Crib Procession on Christmas Eve** is very popular and attracts people from far beyond the town. This is arranged in partnership with a town committee which organises carol singing around the Guildhall Christmas Tree in support of a Cancer charity. There is an **Advent Carol Service** every year.



With friends from other denominations in Thaxted, there is a **Walk of Witness** held together on Good Friday. Ecumenical links in Thaxted are strong with regular mutual contact and support via 'Churches Together' who work to deliver the Big Brekkie for Christian Aid, the annual Harvest Supper and Messy Church.

The Church has longstanding links with Thaxted Primary School which, while not a Church School, uses the church for its end of term services, Christmas celebrations, School Play and other activities.

A team of volunteers provides hospitality after the Sunday and Wednesday services and caters for special events, and there is an active Fundraising Committee who organise events such as the May and Christmas Fayres – with the generous support of Moorcroft Pottery – the Christmas Tree Festival, and activities to interest children, such as a "Teddy Parachute Jump" from the church roof.

## The Villages

Each church has two services a month, an 8.00am Holy Communion (1662) and a 9.30am Sung Eucharist so that there are normally two services among the villages each Sunday. One of the 9.30am services, in rotation, becomes a non-Eucharistic service. When there is a fifth Sunday in the month there is only one service for the whole united Benefice, a Sung Eucharist, rotated around the churches in turn.

Key festivals, such as Easter, Advent, Christmas, Mothering Sunday and Harvest are held as a united service for the Villages and are rotated around the churches annually. Prior to the Pandemic, once a month at the Sung Eucharist, the young people had a separate activity entitled '**Churchtastic**', which we are keen to re-establish.

As with Thaxted, there are important special services which include the **Christmas Eve 'Crib Service'** at Radwinter, and at Hempstead and one of the other Village Churches there is a service of **Nine Lessons and Carols** with readings by members of village societies. There is always an **Advent Carol Service** in one of the Village churches. Great Sampford holds an annual **Pet Service** as a good outreach event and local children attend the **Little Sampford Pentecost Service**, which in 2020 focused on the theme of 'Wild Worship'. Radwinter's close links with its Church Primary School are reflected in the annual **Christingle Service** and its **Primary School Leavers' Service**.

Each Village church has its own **Remembrance Sunday Service**, as the connections around the individual parish memorials are so important to maintain – for example Sampford Primary School always brings the two older classes to the Remembrance Service.

Lay people act as sidespersons, read lessons and sometimes lead the intercessions. There are robed servers, some of whom administer the chalice. Children have in the past played a significant role in the All-Age Eucharist, something we would like to re-commence when the opportunity presents itself.

## Attendance

Thaxted attracts on average 12 to the Sunday 8.00am service; 50 to the 11.00am service and 15 to the Wednesday 10.00am service.

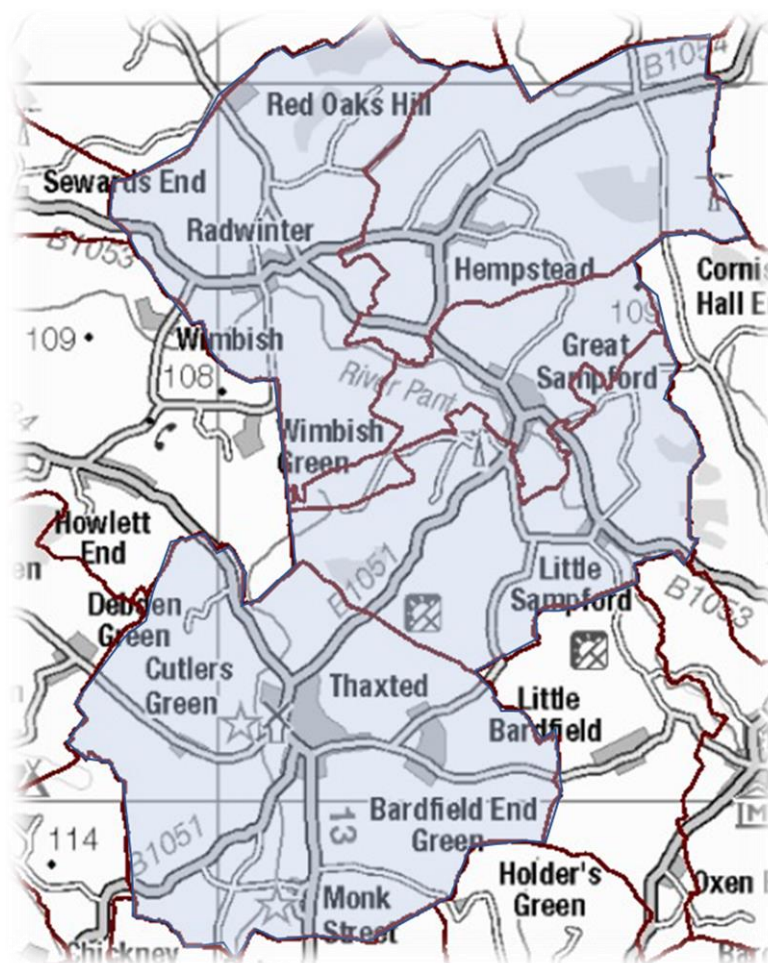
The Villages have an average of 8 attendees at the 8.00am service on Sunday and 20 at the 9.30am Service on Sunday.

In common with many churches across the country, all the Parishes have seen a reduction in attendees since the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst we have seen some recovery recently, there is still much to do to recover fully and then grow our church attendances.



The Pet Service at Great Sampford

## LIVING IN OUR COMMUNITY



The population of the Benefice at the 2021 census was 5,052 and breaks down as follows:

2021 Data						Identifying as Christian (2021 Census)
	Under 9	10–17	18-64	Over 65	Total	
Thaxted	364	267	1734	752	3117	631
Radwinter	69	59	394	137	659	128
Great Sampford	45	70	320	145	580	115
Hempstead	40	50	236	105	431	90
Little Sampford	34	23	147	61	265	57
	<b>552</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>2831</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>5052</b>	<b>1021</b>

The Benefice is a rural community with one substantial market town (Thaxted – <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thaxted>) and a number of smaller communities, all with a lively social life, with many local organisations, shops, pubs and restaurants. There is relatively little local employment within the parishes - the majority of people commute to work in other centres, many to London.

More detailed information about each of the Benefice constituent communities is given in the section on 'Our Churches – Buildings, governance and communities'. In addition, information is available from our local magazines: Thaxted has a town magazine 'A.B.C.U Thaxted Community Magazine' (<https://www.abc-u.co.uk/>), and the Villages have an award winning quarterly magazine, AMBO. Both magazines normally include an article written by the Rector.

## Schools



There are three Primary Schools in the Benefice - Thaxted Primary School, Radwinter Church of England Primary School and Great Sampford Primary School.

The only Church school in the Benefice is Radwinter CofE Primary School, the incumbent being ex-officio Governor and taking assembly once a term. Until the Pandemic a layperson also took a weekly assembly, and since then 'Open the Book' is held monthly (lay person led) for the children, involving them in drama based on Bible stories.

There is also a monthly 'Seedlings' initiative for toddlers and their carers, plus the early years class of Sampford schoolchildren with their teachers, with the Baptist Churches and the Villages churches in the Sampfords.

A good working relationship exists with the schools at Thaxted and Great Sampford with the Rector or Ministry Team member being invited in to take assemblies each term, and the schools invited to hold Harvest, Christmas end-of-term services and concerts in church. Senior schools are located at Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Newport.



## FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

### Resources for worship



*The Sampford Singers*

There is no choir for the Village churches, but on major festivals the Villages singing is led by the Sampford Singers, a non-Church group of largely Church members, who support at least one Sung Eucharist each month. There are organists who regularly play in each Church and other musicians help out when required.

There is an established group of ringers, with members in Thaxted, Radwinter and Hempstead, which rings for the main Sunday service at Thaxted and in the Villages where ringing is possible (the bells at Great Sampford cannot be rung for safety reasons and there is only one bell at Little Sampford). Thaxted also has a handbell group.

### Other useful facilities

Facilities are appropriate for the needs of a 21st Century congregation. Toilets suitable for the disabled have been installed at Radwinter and Great Sampford, and in Little Sampford a composting toilet has been installed in its award-winning conservation Churchyard. There are no toilets in Thaxted church or its grounds - several solutions have been explored but all are either prohibitively expensive or out of keeping with the age and character of the building (Grade I Listed). The Swan Pub opposite is very accommodating.

Thaxted has its own Church Hall, which has recently been refurbished under the management of a separate Trust but is well integrated into the church. There are good halls in each Village community used for church and social activities as required.

Thaxted's Vicar and Churchwardens hold the Chantry, a listed former Almshouse, in trust. There is a tenant in place.

### Additional Community Support

Each Parish is supported by a variety of 'Friends' and Building Trusts and other fundraising events. All the churches are used for varying community events including music, wine tasting, village suppers and even medieval banquets!

#### The Friends of Thaxted Church and the Moorcroft Pottery

The church hosts the May and Christmas Fayres, which, with the local connection with Moorcroft Pottery, attracts a great deal of support. The very active 'Friends of Thaxted Church' frequently organise fundraising events and concerts - the Rector is a Trustee of the 'Friends of Thaxted Church'. There is also a fundraising group comprising members of the congregation and local community, and fundraising events attract a great many people from outside the town.



### The Friends of Radwinter Church and the Radwinter Church Buildings Trust

The church fabric benefits from a charity, 'The Friends of Radwinter Church', which exists for the 'preservation of the fabric of the Church' - in recent years they have assisted with the churchyard repairs and new paths, and helped to restore church fittings.

### The Sampfords Buildings Trust

As an independent charity, the Sampfords Churches Building Trust, was established in 1996 to support the fabric of the two churches in the Sampfords and provides financial support to that end from its income stream.

### The Friends of Hempstead Church

Hempstead hold a Christmas card exchange, and the PCC distribute cards around the village for a small donation. This, which is run along with the Friends of Hempstead Church, is a fun social event which includes stalls, and refreshments.

## OUR CHURCHES – BUILDINGS, GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITIES

All our churches are listed buildings, and all are heated. Each church is described in more detail below, but collectively they are medieval buildings, overlaid with a rich history of decoration and development dating right up to the present.

### THAXTED

#### The Church – St John the Baptist with Our Lady & St Laurence

<https://www.ttsrh.org/thaxted>

Thaxted has a long Anglo-Catholic tradition established by Revd Conrad Noel in the early 1900s. The congregation is mainly older people, but more young families are moving into the new housing and are encouraged to join the monthly 'Open Doors' Eucharist, supported by a singing group.

The mediaeval church stands on a hill, dominating the town. It was described by Sir John Betjeman as 'One of the great churches of England' - the splendid spire (said to be the only mediaeval stone spire in Essex), rises to a height of 181 feet and can be seen for many miles around. There is an excellent 'walk around' guide in the church available to visitors.

As with all buildings of the age and size of Thaxted Parish Church, there is a long list of maintenance and improvements required. While our 2021 Quinquennial Report was encouraging, with no urgent items to address, the lead on both transept roofs requires complete replacement, and the lead on the Becket Chapel roof needs extensive repair. The electric lighting in the church is inadequate, especially in comparison to the amazing brightness of the church during daylight hours. A project in the late stages of the design phase is in flight. Over £100k has already been raised, with a further £40k needed.



At the beginning of the last century Revd Conrad Noel, brought music, dance and social justice to the church and the legacy still lives on. The musical tradition was enhanced by Gustav Holst, a onetime resident and organist. There are three organs: the largest was built by Henry Lincoln in 1820 and came here from St John's Chapel, Bedford Row, London, in 1858. It is a little altered Georgian Organ, awarded a Grade I certificate by the British Institute of Organ Studies, which was extensively restored in 2016. (<https://thaxtedlincolnorgan.uk>)

The church is much in demand for weddings - with its large capacity it attracts qualifying young couples back to Thaxted from far afield. The parish is part of 'Churches Together' in Thaxted and works well with the congregations of the Roman Catholic, Baptist and URC churches. Working together, these congregations produce a Parish Magazine – ABC&U – which is delivered to all the homes in Thaxted ([www.abc-u.co.uk](http://www.abc-u.co.uk)).

Our Eco Church group works with many other environmental societies in Thaxted. One example of what the group has done is to reduce our church building's energy usage significantly over the past 2 years as result of a simple, low-cost insulation and LED lights project which was commended by the assessor in our Energy Audit in Nov 2023, leading also to our carbon footprint being measurably reduced in the past year.

We have recently launched a new "Coffee Corner" which allows the catering team to provide good quality tea, coffee, hot chocolate and cakes after each service. We would like to develop this further to offer a "Chat Café" during the week for residents from the wider community.

## Governance

Thaxted has two Churchwardens, a Treasurer, a PCC Secretary and a committed PCC with 12 members.

## Our Community

Thaxted is a busy market town with several developments extending the population. It is well served by a Surgery and Pharmacy, Post Office, garage, mini supermarket, pubs and cafes and an assortment of specialist outlets. There are many pleasant and safe routes for those wanting exercise, with or without dogs. There is a good social life within the town.

The Thaxted Parish Council publish a community magazine published three times per annum. The local community is vibrant - a weekly market is held, and a recent Clubs and Societies Fair attracted around 35 groups, representing a wide range of activities available locally. The Thaxted Surgery provides general practice healthcare to the community, and Humfrey Lodge provides a homely environment for older people, including those with dementia.

The annual Thaxted Music Festival, founded by Gustav Holst, continues the strong musical traditions over four weekends in June and July every year, presenting a programme of musical concerts given by nationally recognised musicians in the Church and supported by people from a wide area. Annual productions by the school are also accommodated in the church and children and their parents are welcomed for their Harvest and Christmas services.



## THE VILLAGES – RADWINTER, THE SAMPFORDS & HEMPSTEAD

### RADWINTER

#### The Church – St Mary the Virgin

<https://www.ttsrh.org/radwinter>

The church stands in the centre of the village and is mediaeval in origin, with the nave dating from about 1250, albeit much of the church was heavily restored and enlarged in 1869-70. Some elements of the old church were kept, including the 14th century porch. Further work was undertaken later with the rebuilding of the tower and spire - there are eight bells in the tower, and the fourth and seventh are by Robert Oldfield, dated 1616. More of the original old church can be seen inside, including the 14th century nave roof. There is fine Victorian work as well, particularly the chancel screen. The reredos is what many consider to be Radwinter's greatest treasure - it is Flemish and from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and shows scenes from the Life of Our Lady.



*The Radwinter Reredos*

## Governance

Radwinter has one Churchwarden, and one deputy, and the PCC includes a strong Treasurer, together with a wider group of helpers. Whilst the group is getting older, recent joiners have added energy, although additional helpers will need to be identified over the next few years.

## Our Community



Other than Radwinter village itself, the parish is largely rural, with farming the predominant activity. The village is small and closely connected, with many of the older houses and cottages dating back to Tudor times. The centre of the village consists of (in addition to the Church) a number of buildings including a village hall and primary school that are listed for their historical and architectural value. They were constructed in 1873 after a fire that destroyed half the village.

There is also a sport and recreation ground (with active football and bowls clubs as well as a recently constructed pavilion) and a very popular local public house and restaurant, The

Plough Inn. The church is opened on the first Saturday of each month for a Coffee Morning, a popular social event that provides an opportunity for visitors to review its treasures. The Zeta House in the churchyard is open daily and provides a library and quiet space that is much used by the villagers.

## THE SAMPFORDS

### The Church – St Michael (Great Sampford)

<https://www.ttsrh.org/great-sampford>

In Great Sampford the church forms the focal point of the village, overlooking open fields. Whilst much of the church was built (it is said by the Knights Hospitallers) in the 14th Century, the south chapel is late 13<sup>th</sup> century and was the transept of a former church. The windows of the chancel have fine tracery, particularly the large 5-light east window. On the interior the chancel has stone arcades above stone benches, said to have seated Knights Hospitallers.

### The Church - St Mary the Virgin (Little Sampford)

<https://www.ttsrh.org/little-sampford>

The church in Little Sampford shows evidence of an interruption of the building work after the lower 2 stages of the tower were completed before the mid-14th century, probably due to the intervention of the Black Death. The nave with quatrefoil clerestory windows is 14th century the chancel was rebuilt and the North porch added in the late 15th century. The interior has a number of 16th, 17th and 18th century monuments.

## Governance

The Sampfords have two Churchwardens, and one deputy, supported by a PCC with a Treasurer and a further four members.

## Our Community

Great Sampford includes a primary school, a pub and restaurant and a playground with a small football pitch and a tennis court. Little Sampford consists of a small number of isolated houses and farms. Both churches are open daily. Little Sampford hosts a fortnightly afternoon event, 'Have I Got News For You' that takes varying forms and is a popular social activity that is not restricted to church members. The churchyard has a popular Nature Trail for adults and children. The 'Sampford Signal' provides an electronic diary of services and events.

There is a Village Hall, shared with the school, used for a wide variety of activities including a successful Youth Club. There are close links with the Baptist church in the village, who participate in the monthly 'Seedlings' initiative which is a group for pre-school children and their carers. The Sampfords has a long-established Cricket Club which celebrated its Bicentenary in the 1980s and is now the owner of the freehold to its ground and the recently built pavilion.



*Children exploring the theme of 'Wind' at the Little Sampford Pentecost Service*

## HEMPSTEAD

### The Church – St Andrew

<https://www.ttsrh.org/hempstead>

St Andrew's is a mediaeval church dating from 1229 which stands on one of the highest points of Essex. The church has many historical connections, and its Harvey Chapel, which is a National Monument, is dedicated to William Harvey who discovered the circulation of blood and Eilab Harvey who commanded the *Temeraire*, the support ship to Nelson during the Battle of the Trafalgar. The crypt is the burial place for members of the Harvey family, which houses many lead coffins. St Andrew's recently held a Harvey Memorial exhibition to highlight the need for funds to restore the monuments of William Harvey - this is ongoing.

### Governance

Hempstead's PCC is a committed team of four and the support of a retired Treasurer. There are no Churchwardens. We are actively looking to expand our team.

### Our Community

St Andrew's sits in the heart of Hempstead Village, surrounded by rural Essex countryside. The community is socially and economically diverse. Most of the younger Hempstead children go to school in Radwinter. Historically farming was the main employer in the village; today, many residents commute to work, mainly to London or Cambridge; nevertheless, farming is intrinsically linked within the local community. The village hall, which is used by various village societies, including Scouts/Cubs, Amateur Dramatic Society and for Parish Council meetings. The Glebe has a new recreation area. A monthly newsletter is emailed to residents of the village and includes news of village life and events, including church services.



*Stir Up Sunday at Hempstead*

## **FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING**

Another legacy of the recent creation of our Benefice is that the four PCCs are each responsible for their own finances. We see this as another area that our Benefice Governance Working Party will need to examine to see whether rationalisation may eventually be possible.

Our Benefice Parish Share payment to the Diocese in 2024 was set at £80,460 which is divided up between the parishes in an agreed formula. There has been much discussion as to whether the formula for attributing each Parish's share should be changed as while Thaxted and Radwinter are able to meet their obligations in full, Hempstead and the Sampfords are not able to meet their payment.

Established regular giving schemes taking full advantage of Gift Aid are in place in each Parish. A Stewardship Campaign has broad support and now needs to be implemented.

### **Thaxted**

Thaxted Parish Church has an annual turnover of c. £150k per annum with 35 - 40% through the Parish Regular Giving Scheme which is well subscribed and ensures a predictable income throughout the year. Thaxted has seen an increase in giving since we introduced a "Donation Station" by the main door. Income is also generated through Church hire fees and fundraising events.

The major expenditure items are the Parish Share, insurance, utilities and the upkeep of three churchyards. After the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the church's income, we have seen a significant reduction in reserves down to £90k with about two-thirds in restricted funds. A project is planned to replace the antiquated lighting at a cost of around £150k.

The Chantry is owned by, and in trust to, the Rector and Churchwardens.

### **Radwinter**

Radwinter income is now around £20,000 per year, and roughly balancing expenditure, PCC finances having improved in recent years. This has enabled the Parish to pay the full Parish Share in 2024, and it has also made-up arrears from prior years, after the success of several fundraising efforts, (including the introduction of a 100 Club Lottery). The church remains dependent on a small number of regular but substantial donors, but is in the fortunate position of having received a generous legacy five years ago for the upkeep of the fabric of the church. Whilst this fund is restricted in its use, it has been of enormous assistance in tackling larger fabric related projects.

### **The Sampfords**

The parish can expect an income from giving of circa £16,000 this year and possibly a little less next year, a combination of giving and a successful 100 Club lottery. Major items of expenditure are the Parish Share of £19,500 and insurance of the two church buildings at £5,600; however, for the first time ever, the Sampfords will be unable to meet its Parish Share this year. The shortfall is the consequence of losing some very generous donors who had underpinned the finances for some time. Finances have also suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reserves of £8,000 provide some immediate relief but income needs to be increased if financial stability is to be restored, since work is currently being undertaken on the tower of St Michael's (Great Sampford) which will leave very little left in the fabric fund, and expenditure in excess of £60,000 is needed on the fabric of St Mary the Virgin (Little Sampford) where the fabric fund has a balance of around £20,000.

## **Hempstead**

Revenue is now inadequate to meet running costs - major annual expenditure includes Insurance £2500, Parish Share £9500 and Utilities £900, and Hempstead may fail to meet its Parish Share this year depending on the findings of a Quinquennial Report planned for October. Recent one-off expenditure on roof repairs, tree surgery and repairs to the electrics have reduced the balances held, but on the plus side the church now is in good state of repair and no major expenditure is anticipated immediately.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you for taking the time to read this profile; we hope you feel called to join us. Our Parish Representatives are praying for clear discernment as we seek to follow where God is calling, and we are excited for our future and hope you are too.

If you would like a further conversation, or a visit to our beautiful rural Benefice, please contact the Venerable Kate Peacock, Archdeacon of Stansted, at [astansted@chelmsford.anglican.org](mailto:astansted@chelmsford.anglican.org) or 01376 563357.