

# The Benefice of Holwell, Ickleford & Pirton Profiles



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
**DIOCESE OF  
ST ALBANS**

# The Benefice of Holwell, Ickleford and Pirton

Thank you for reading our Benefice Profile. We trust that it will give you both a glimpse of the blessings and opportunities that our village communities have to offer and some insights into our shared understanding of the task to which our new incumbent is called.

This United Benefice was created on 1 April 2005. It brought together three attractive village parishes situated in North Hertfordshire close to the Bedfordshire border. The villages are surrounded by arable farmland and countryside with views of the Chiltern Hills while being close to the old market town of Hitchin. Although each of the villages is distinctive, the three communities are committed to work together and look forward to further links being developed between them.

The St Albans Diocesan Board of Patronage and the Dean and Chapter of Ely are joint patrons.

## Ministerial Team

The Revd Canon John Payne Cook was the first incumbent of the United Benefice having been appointed Priest in Charge of the three churches in 2003. He retired on 30 September 2010.

Since 2003 the Revd Margaret Holford, a non stipendiary minister, has been curate in the Benefice but with special responsibility for Ickleford. She now holds the Bishop's Permission to Officiate.

There is also a Reader, Gena Edwards, and a Reader in Training, Margaret Johnson, both living in Pirton.

## Our needs

We hope that we will be blessed with someone who is able to:-

- Be a visible and loving presence in each of the three parishes - reaching out into the communities and being involved in village life beyond the church.
- Develop the spiritual life of the parishes and reach out to all age groups.
- Pray with us and for us.
- Provide leadership to the three communities and encourage their interaction and participation.

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## The Parish of Holwell

The parish of Holwell is in a picturesque setting, surrounded by beautiful open views of arable countryside and a backdrop of the Chiltern Hills to the southwest. A panoramic view of the area can be

seen from the nearby beauty spot of Sharpenhoe Clappers, close to Barton-le-Clay. Red Kites are found wheeling in the skies above and there is a local Barn Owl Project, which helps to protect this endangered species. There are interesting walks locally, including some dedicated to viewing Barn Owl habitats. Holwell was transferred by local government order from Bedfordshire to Hertfordshire in 1897 and is a small linear village that is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

### Housing

Holwell has a population of about 350, the majority of whom are over the age of 45, with most of the children being under 10. Housing in the village has developed slowly over the years with some infilling lately. Few of Holwell's ancient buildings remain and the majority of the housing is 20<sup>th</sup> century, approximately divided evenly between rented and privately owned. The John Rand Charities own the former rectory and 6 cottages, as well as 7 purpose-built bungalows for the elderly.

Council housing was developed along the main thoroughfare from 1920 to 1940s and many of these houses are now privately owned. In 1955 an estate was built for council tenants as overspill from post-war London. Originally these properties were for short-term occupation and deemed unsuitable for mortgage. They have recently been renovated and are an attractive part of the village and some are now in private ownership.



### Village Amenities

Farmland surrounds the village and there is a farm shop which sells fresh produce, eggs, animal feed, etc. A short distance along the A600 is a small garden centre, a timber merchant and an alternative therapy clinic.



The village is fortunate to have a well-maintained Village Hall that is regularly used by local groups such as the Offley Morris Men, the Tap Academy, the Apostolic Church of God and the Holwell Ladies group. It is a venue for Parish Council meetings, other official functions and many successful fund-raising events have been held there in aid of St Peter's church.

There is an immaculately kept Recreation Ground, home to a well supported and successful Bowls Club

and Cricket Club. The Ground includes a toddlers' play area, due to be refurbished when grants become available. Holwell and Pirton have a joint Over 60s Club which meets weekly. Holwell has an affiliation with the Pumpkin Club in Pirton, a busy organisation which holds annual produce shows and provides a Christmas Dinner for older residents.



In 1984 the John Rand Primary School was closed due to the shortage of pupils. Since then children have attended either Ickleford VC Primary School or Pirton Primary School, for which transport is provided. Secondary education is provided in Hitchin at Hitchin Boys' and Hitchin Girls' Schools and co-educationally at the Priory School.

The 1990s saw the closure of both the local public house and the village shop/post office. Fortunately both these facilities are available in Pirton and Ickleford.

The 89 bus route serves Holwell and Pirton, as well as other local villages. This route operates to and from Hitchin throughout the day on weekdays with slightly altered times on Saturdays. There is no Sunday service. There is a Hitchin/Bedford bus route along the A600 from Monday to Saturday. Hitchin railway station is a 30 minute journey from Kings Cross.

'Round and About Holwell' is the parish magazine which is delivered twice yearly and is free to every house in the village. It contains details concerning St Peter's services and other church matters, as well as general information about village organisations and items of other interest locally. It is paid for by the parish council and is edited and compiled by a member of the PCC.

## John Rand Educational Foundation

Children in Holwell (as well as Ickleford, Pirton and Lower Stondon) are beneficiaries of the Rand's Foundation. Tale has it that John Rand, a joiner born in 1664 in Holwell but living in London, was discovered dead in Holwell. He owned properties in Greenwich and Plaistow which he bequeathed to the churchwardens and overseers of Holwell, so that money could be given to the poor children of the village to buy 'cloathes and necessaries'. The charity is still very active in the villages, giving grants to children entering higher education, as well as supporting the local schools.

## The Church of St Peter

The small parish church of St Peter was rebuilt in 1877 and was rededicated by the Bishop of Ely in 1879. There has been a church on the same site for over a thousand years - the Saxon king, Edgar, granted the charter in 968 AD. It is believed that the present building is the fourth. Holwell parish had a Rector from 1224 to 1980, after which it became a Joint Benefice with Ickleford. This arrangement continued until 2002, when the incumbent retired. In 2005, the United Benefice of Holwell, Ickleford and Pirton (HIP) was created and continues to date. No incumbent priest has lived in Holwell since 1980.



St Peter's is situated in the middle of the village. The outside is faced in local stone and flint. Inside there is an unusual mosaic reredos. A stained glass window of St Alban, which incorporates a small etching of St Albans Abbey, is on the north wall of the Sanctuary. By the pulpit is a flagstone with rare small brasses

dedicated to a pre-reformation rector of Holwell, Robert Wodehouse. The church is open to visitors during daylight hours and is a beautiful, quiet and peaceful place. The churchyard is well maintained and is still open for burials.



## Fabric

As the church was rebuilt in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there have not been some of the problems that beset older churches. During the 1990s part of the church roof and guttering were restored. More recently, several of the church's stained glass windows have been renovated. The requirements of the latest Quinquennial Inspection are being met and, generally, the fabric of the church is in good order.



Although regularly maintained the organ, installed in 1904 by Atterton & Sons, is in poor condition and needs considerable repair work. There is a Clavinova in the church.

St Peter's benefits from a great deal of goodwill from parishioners and there is a willing pool of volunteers who clean the church, arrange flowers and maintain the churchyard.

## Services

At present there is a Communion with Hymns on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month and a said Holy Communion service on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, both at 9.30am. When there is a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in the month, a joint service has been held either in St Peter's, St. Katharine's Church, Ickleford or St Mary the Virgin, Pirton at 10.00am. It is hoped to continue holding services on feast days and other special days, even if not within the usual service pattern. It is felt strongly that these occasions help to keep the parishioners in touch with the church, particularly if they are not regular worshippers.

The Common Worship Lectionary (New International Version) is used, together with the Common Worship Service Book. At Communion services a surplice and stole are worn. At present there are 17 on the electoral roll (including 4 from outside the parish). The Sacrament is given monthly to 2 elderly parishioners in their homes. The average number of communicants at a regular service is 10, which increases on special occasions such as Mothering Sunday and Harvest Festival. Approximately 40 people attend Christmas services, less at Easter. Since 2008 there have been 5 marriages, 7 baptisms and 7 funerals held in the church.



The Churchwardens see their leadership as most effective in the maintenance of the church as a facility in the village, in looking after the church fabric and ensuring that services are well prepared. They aim to continue a worshipping presence in the village, with a warm welcome extended to anyone who attends.

## Financial Position

The present financial position is neither critical nor comfortable and the Parish Share is fully paid. As the congregation ages, numbers are decreasing and this will be an increasing problem for future revenue as worshippers are not attending services on a regular basis.

## Fundraising

Christian stewardship is practised through envelopes and covenants, though the PCC would wish to instigate a stewardship initiative involving the new incumbent and the Diocesan Advisor in due course. Help from volunteers is provided for fundraising events which include an annual barbecue, a Lent lunch and Harvest Supper. Members of the church also participate in the annual Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust Bike 'n Hike. Each December, members of the congregation join the Offley Morris Men to go carolling around the village, ending up in the village hall, where the Morris Men perform a Mummers' play followed by some dancing. Concerts with nationally known musicians have been held in the church on occasion.

## Future Aims

We should like to encourage attendance at St Peter's church which matches the goodwill which undoubtedly flows towards it from many areas in the village, and to offer involvement to the remainder, whose attitude towards the church may be passively indifferent.



In taking up the challenge of looking after the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parishioners of Holwell, we hope that we will be blessed with someone who will be interested in our small village of Holwell, resisting the temptation of regarding it as less important than the larger parts of the Benefice. We need true support and guidance in creating a whole and happier place in which to continue on our spiritual journey.

*This is going to be a challenging role and is not for the faint-hearted. However, we are looking forward to giving our full support to the person who is given to us.*

# The Parish of Ickleford

## Summary

This document is the Parish Profile for the parish of St Katharine's Ickleford, prepared as part of the process to fill the vacancy that resulted from the retirement, on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010, of Reverend Canon John Payne-Cook MA.



## Introduction

Ickleford is a village with a population of around 1800 that is to be found just to the north of the market town of Hitchin where the Icknield Way crosses the river Hiz. It is 4 miles from the first planned 'garden city' in the UK, Letchworth; and 9 miles from the first planned 'new town' of Stevenage.

St Katharine's Church falls within the Diocese of St Albans which comprises 334 parishes and Hitchin is one of 23 deaneries. We are part of the Benefice of Holwell, Ickleford and Pirton, which is part of the Hitchin Deanery. The benefice was formed in 2005 following the joining together of the benefices of "Ickleford with Holwell" and "Pirton". The Reverend Canon John Payne-Cook became the first incumbent, having been appointed as Priest in Charge of three churches in 2003. It is as a result of John's retirement in September 2010 that we have a vacancy in the benefice.

We are fortunate in Ickleford in having a non stipendiary priest residing in the village. In November 2003 the Reverend Margaret Holford was licensed in St Katharine's to act as curate with special responsibility for Ickleford. She now holds the Bishop's Permission to Officiate. Prior to her ordination in 1999 Margaret had been an active member, for many years, of the church and its organisations and we were pleased to welcome her in her new role where she was able to give great assistance during the interregnum prior to John's appointment with whom she developed a close and harmonious relationship under his authority.

## The Church

The church stands, surrounded by the churchyard, a little above and back from the road through the village opposite the village shop. It is the only place of worship in the village.

Around 1150 work started on the current building of St Katharine's Church and provided a simple nave that provided seating for around 80 people. The chancel and tower were added



in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and a porch in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1859 modifications, designed by Sir Gilbert Scott, were completed. These added the south aisle with vault below, and south east chapel, which gives the building its present form. In the 1960's and also the 1980's work was carried out to strengthen the tower structure; and later in 2007 extensive remedial work to remedy other defects was completed. In completing the rebuilding of sections of the external surface of the east wall a small area of

pargetting was uncovered and is visible today. These packages of work were funded from moneys raised by the parish and grant contributions. In 2003 the south east chapel, which had previously housed the organ, was converted into a quiet room and the organ repositioned at the east end of the south aisle.

The building is open during daylight hours to enable visitors to enter for prayer and personal devotion, and to enjoy the sense of peace and tranquillity and view the Victorian font and pulpit, Victorian oak pews and stained glass windows; and more often than not, beautiful flower arrangements.

There is no toilet, kitchen or running water within the church building but the PCC now has outline plans for an extension to the north side which will provide these facilities. These 'schemes' have been well received by the PCC, the Diocese Advisory Committee and our near neighbours and we are hopeful that they will lead to a successful conclusion. We need the 'convenience' of our own toilet during the various activities that take place in the church; we are looking forward to the availability of a meeting room for Sunday school and other activities and the kitchen facility will make the provision of refreshments at concerts and other events so much easier.

The exciting and innovative design should provide the accommodation that will enrich and encourage our church life.



## The Village

The village has a strong sense of community and has featured prominently in the Hertfordshire 'best kept village' during the past 20 years. 'Best kept village' was succeeded by the more comprehensive 'Village of the Year' which was awarded to Ickleford in 2008 entitling Ickleford to represent Hertfordshire in the national competition. Ickleford Parish Council was awarded Quality Parish Status on Thursday 2nd July 2009 and was the first parish in North Hertfordshire to achieve this. As a result of an initiative by the Parish Council a Parish Plan for Ickleford was distributed in March 2006 after nearly two years of hard work and consultation with the village community. The plan is seen as a 'living document' that can grow as the needs and aspirations of the village evolve. The PCC has a harmonious working relationship with the PC and both benefit from this.

The village benefits from an open space 'Upper Green' that is between the church and the school and a second 'Lower Green' at the north end of the village. Further to the north there is a large area of common land that borders the river Hiz. The village is surrounded by agricultural land except on the boundary with Hitchin where just one field separates the two communities. The village boasts four public houses, a busy village shop, florist and funeral directors. Bowman's mill provides employment in its production of speciality flours and there are a small number of business units on the site of the former manor. The Old Dairy is the headquarters of the North Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service. The CMS works on behalf of the County Council with landowners, communities and volunteer groups on rural enhancements, community projects and land management schemes. Examples of projects with which our communicants are involved include the Three Parishes Barn Owl Group and The Parish Paths Partnership. Beyond these, the village primarily provides accommodation for people commuting to London or working in the surrounding towns, in local authority and privately owned housing. There is also some warden controlled housing for the elderly.

The village has thriving Cricket, Squash and Petanque clubs that are based at the Recreation Ground which is just off Upper Green. Three ladies or youth football teams from Hitchin also



use the playing field for training and matches. There is a great demand for the Village Hall, also not far from the green. It is host to many activities, for both children and adults, including the pre-school group, scouts, beavers and also the Church Harvest Supper. The hall in the village school is also used by the parish for other events such as the annual Christmas Fayre. At the northern end, the road through the village passes under the British Rail main line from London to Peterborough: here can be found two of the working farms in the parish, one of

which specialises in growing lavender and the other the equestrian facilities.

Adjacent to the recreation ground there is the Alleyfield Burial Ground. This is a recent addition in April 2010 and has been made possible by the generosity of a local resident who expressed the wish that the plot of nearly five acres of land be used to provide a new burial ground for those with a connection to the village as the existing churchyard has no room for further burials other than in an area for cremated remains.

## The School

The school is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School and was built in 1848 although the first record of a school in Ickleford was in 1839. The front of the school is a Grade 2 listed building and behind it are classrooms which were built in the 1960s and 1970s. There are over 200 children on the school roll and the school is regularly oversubscribed and is rated Outstanding by OFSTED. It is small enough for each child to be known well by everyone, yet large enough to provide a wide range of educational experiences. The children from the school are welcomed into the church for teaching purposes, as well as attending a yearly Harvest Thanksgiving Service, their Carol Concert and a Leaving Service for Year 6, attended by the whole school. Reverend Margaret is the present Chairman of Governors. She takes Assemblies regularly and is in very close contact with the Head teacher, staff and children.

## Church services

During a normal week there are three services on a Sunday, and one on a Thursday morning. The main Sunday service at 9:30am is a Common Worship sung Eucharist, at which alb and chasuble are worn, and is well attended. Adults as well as young members of the church serve and the young people are acolytes. Lay members assist with the chalice. Lay members also are readers, sacristans, and sidespersons. The Junior Choir give us an anthem during Communion each week. Hymns are chosen from 'The New English Hymnal' 'Songs of Praise', (and occasionally from hymn sheets) and sung to the accompaniment of the organ. The younger children normally leave the service for their own time in the side vestry during the sermon, except once each month at the 'family service' when they remain and the whole congregation hears an address that is focused on them.



We are fortunate to have both an 8:00am 'said' Common Worship Eucharist and 6:00pm BCP Evensong service with five dedicated followers. These services are sometimes augmented by parishioners who are unable to attend the 9.30am Eucharist

The midweek Common Worship Eucharist held each Thursday at 9.10am has an average attendance of 12. The start time has been deliberately chosen to allow the young mums the opportunity to drop their children off at school before attending.

For the period of Lent and the Festivals of Easter and Christmas our clergy have led numerous and varied services. We have become accustomed to some form of devotion on each of the evenings of Holy week. During the lead in to Christmas we have 'Carols on the Green' which draws in a large number of village residents, Carols by Candlelight and a Christingle service which this year was held in the school at the end of term.

## Church attendance

For our regular Sunday services over the year to September 2010, we had on average the following numbers of attendees:

- Sunday 08:00 6
- Sunday 09:30 70
- Sunday 18:00 7
- Thursday morning 09:10 12
- Good Friday 66
- Easter Day 88
- Midnight mass 50
- Christmas Day 88

## Church activities

The PCC has a lay membership of 12 of which 2 represent St Katharine's at the Hitchin Deanery meetings. It meets on average 6 times a year. There are standing committees which meet as necessary. Small groups are set up to deal with matters as they arise.

The wide variety of events organised by the dedicated committee contribute to increasing the much needed church funds whilst providing involvement for all the community with elements of fun learning and relaxation. Some of these events are annual such as Ickleford Open Gardens, Harvest Supper, Christmas Fayre and others rotate over two to three years such as Quiz Night, Call My Bluff Beetle Drive, Treasure Hunt. The strong musical interests among the congregation lead to concerts being held in St Katharine's with performances from our members and from outside musicians and singers.

During the past few years we have rarely been without an organist. On the few occasions when our regular church organist has not been available a member of the church has been willing to take his place. Our regular organist leads and rehearses our adult choir 'St Katharine's Singers' who sing at all the major festivals. Reverend Margaret and our organist rehearse our Junior Choir who sing at the Sunday 9:30 service, and also at weddings and any other service during the year, as requested.

The time our younger members of the congregation 'Friends Of God' has during the 9:30 service is their time of learning through listening thinking talking and creative activity based on the gospel reading.



A happy informal group 'Mums and Tots' is open to parents and guardians of preschool age children. This forms an early introduction to church activities for the children and gives the adults the opportunity to meet our clergy and the group helpers.

Once a month, a soup lunch is held in the Church, drawing in many from the wider community including our local PCSO's, to sample the tasty homemade

soups and to chat in a friendly environment.

Once a month, after the Thursday morning service, a Brunch is held. The object is to facilitate an informal group discussion on religious topics.

A weekly Newsletter is produced for each Sunday and we have a parish magazine 'The Wheel' which is published quarterly. This is delivered free, by church volunteers, to every household in the parish. It is funded by a very generous donation from the Parish Council, and many business adverts. Although it is a church publication giving details of services and activities, we include the village activities and contributions from the Parish Council, Police and any other village groups.

The church owns a set of Victorian hand bells which a group of church members ring at festivals and concerts.

For many years we have encouraged our younger members to take part in the Easter Pilgrimage to St Albans Abbey

## Other members of the team

We have no trained Assistant at present but Margaret Johnson, a Reader in training from Pirton, is beginning to participate in our church services

We are fortunate that the Reverend Ian Hanscombe; a retired Baptist minister is living in the village who, although he regularly attends the Baptist church in Hitchin, is willing to take Evensong when asked as are four other lay members of the Church.

## Volunteers

Everything to do with St Katharine's is done on a voluntary basis with many willing groups of people giving a lot of their time keeping to the church clean and beautiful outside and in; and to fundraising. The W.I. organised the production of new Church kneelers. Many members of the congregation and the wider parish embroidered and donated in total 55 kneelers to the Church. They also designed and embroidered a map of the parish of Ickleford as it was in 1887 which is on the North wall of the Church. Ickleford enjoys great support from local businesses and the Church benefits from raffle prize donations such as Pub meal for two, farm turkey, lavender products and advertising materials.

## Financial state

As one parish within the benefice our full Parish Quota for 2011 is expected to be £29,805, and this we expect to be able to cover from our Stewardship planned giving and Gift aid tax recovery. Through the regular giving and fund raising we have been able to pay this in full and on time in recent years. We rely on our 'events committee' to organise both the church social events e.g. the Harvest Supper and also the fund raising events. The major fundraising has been from our 'Christmas Fayre' and the annual Ickleford Open Gardens. We anticipate that as our plans for the new room come closer to fruition we will have to renew our efforts in this area. We have the nucleus of a committee to spearhead this project, but in the meantime we have already raised some £38,000 towards the new building.

Christian stewardship is practised through envelopes, standing orders and Gift Aid.

## Parish needs and the person we are looking for

We feel that we need someone who:

- will have a visible and loving presence in each of the three parishes
- will reach out to and minister to all ages
- is a spiritual leader who is approachable and also a motivator

We feel that a sense of humour is equally as important as a driving licence.

## References

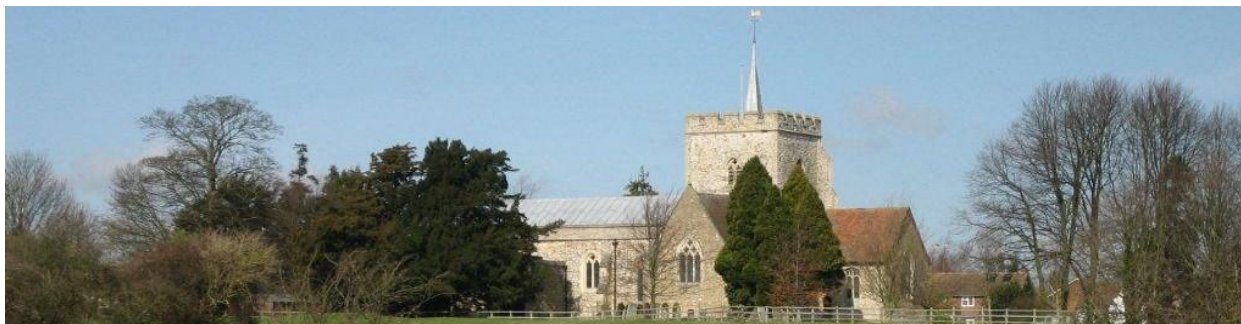
### Photographs

1. Upper Green in summer
2. The church in winter
3. View of the proposed extension (courtesy of Michael Dales Partnership)
4. Harvest Supper in the Village Hall
5. Mothering Sunday 2008 congregation
6. Mums and Tots

### Village Information

There is a wealth of village information available at <http://icklefordpc.com>





## The Parish of Pirton

### Location

Pirton is an attractive and compact village in North Hertfordshire situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty. It is surrounded by arable farmland and countryside that provides views of the Chiltern Hills. Our village is part of the Hitchin and Harpenden Parliamentary Constituency, under the administration of North Hertfordshire District Council. We have our own Parish Council.



The village has a population of 1217 with an age spread from infants to the elderly. There are approximately 450 houses ranging from small cottages to larger homes, most of which are privately owned, although there is a small amount of local authority housing together with a few bungalows for the elderly. Residents are reluctant to leave the village so that when their housing needs change they upsize or downsize within the village rather than move elsewhere.

We have one Post Office shop and two pubs. A mobile fish and chip van and butcher visit weekly.

We have well-used village hall and a Sports and Social Club both of which are used by a large number of organisations from within and outside the village. The Recreation Ground provides for football, cricket and tennis and also a large open area for various other activities.

### Education

Most children go to the village primary school which, although not a church school, has a good working relationship with St Mary's. A small team of church members take assemblies once a week, others serve on the Governing Body, the PTA or act as voluntary assistants in the classroom. A new incumbent would be encouraged to forge a close working relationship with the Headteacher, staff, pupils, governors and the PTA. Secondary education is provided in Hitchin, however a number of children go to independent schools in other nearby towns.



## Leisure and Recreation

We have a range of active clubs and institutions within the village that provide support and care for residents as well as opportunities for leisure and recreation. These include:

Bingo/Whist Drives	WI
Care & Good Neighbour Scheme	Ladies Thursday Group
Cricket Club	Pirton History Group
Cub Scouts	Joy Care
Rainbows, Brownies and Guides	Over 60's Club
Hammonds Trust	Pumpkin Club
Links Group	WW1 Group
Pirton Bury Trust	Good Neighbours
Rands Educational Trust	Pirton Players
Sports and Social Club	Toddlers/Playgroup
Friends of Pirton Parish Church	

## The Church



St. Mary's is a beautiful Grade 1 listed building that has evidence of construction from the 12th Century onwards. The fabric of the church is generally in a good state of repair. The main recommendations of the last Quinquennial report have been undertaken with the non-priority tasks still to be completed.

The Church is financially assisted in maintaining the fabric of the building by The Friends of Pirton Parish Church, and the wider village community who have given generous financial support to many specific capital projects e.g. The Upper

Room.

In October 2009 after seven years of fund raising and grant applications that raised the £127k required, we celebrated the completion of some major projects to update our facilities. This included:

- The regeneration of the South Transept to provide an upper floor meeting and events room, a spacious modern kitchen, and easy access toilet facilities.
- Relocation and restoration of the organ to the west end of the church
- The complete refurbishment of the bells, their fittings and tuning by Taylors of Loughborough
- A new energy efficient and low maintenance lighting scheme



## People



In April 2010 there were 73 people on the Electoral Roll (22 men 51 women) with ages ranging from 23- 90+, five of whom are non-resident in the village. The church building and churchyard is valued, used and cared for by the entire village community including those who rarely attend public worship. We have an enthusiastic and dedicated team of volunteer flower arrangers, cleaners and groundsmen/women who assist in maintaining the church. Lay members are involved as readers, intercessors, servers, lay assistants, sacristans, side-persons, choir, bell-ringers and leaders of family services.

Additionally church members respond to a range of pastoral opportunities both informally and through organised activities such as the Links group. Members are also found playing key roles in most aspects of village life.

## Worship

Our style of worship is broad central tradition with a Eucharistic focus. The priest wears Vestments and the Sacrament is reserved.

## Sunday Services



8.00 am	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	Holy Communion 1662
11.00 am	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	Family Service (non Eucharistic) - Lay led
11.00 am	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Sundays	Parish Communion (CW)
8.00 am	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	Holy Communion (CW) - said
11.00 am	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	Parish Communion (CW) + Footprints for 4-10's
10.00 am	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	United Benefice Holy Communion
4.30 pm	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	Short lay led Service
6.00 pm	Occasional	Evensong / Taizé / Meditation / Compline (lay involvement or lay led)

## Weekday Services

9.10am Wednesday	Holy Communion (CW) / Morning Prayer
10.30am Thursday	Tiny Toes - Worship for babies, toddlers and their carers
4.00pm 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday	Christian Meditation Group

A fortnightly Holy Communion Service is held at Pirton Hall nursing home for the elderly with an average attendance of 10-12 residents and staff.

Home Communion are offered as required.

## Special Services

Special Services are usually arranged at Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, for the Children on Christmas Eve, Candlemas, Mothering Sunday and Palm Sunday. In July we hold an outdoor service on the Bury and on Good Friday there is an all-age workshop that is linked to the worship on Easter Sunday.



## Occasional Offices

There are averages of 10 baptisms, 6 weddings and 10 funerals per year.

There are very occasional confirmation candidates.

## Average Attendance at Services

8.00am Holy Communion 1662 10 people (age range older members of the Congregation).

11.00am Family services (non-Eucharist) 45 people (wide cross section of ages, especially young families).

11.00am Parish Communion 35 people (wide cross section).

## Music

We have a mixed musical tradition:

For Holy Communion services we have a small traditional choir with a visiting organist or we use CDs.

A small group of instrumentalists (children and adults) plays for Family Services. We have an orchestra for the Children's Carol Services on Christmas Eve and a young organist in training.

We have a team of bell-ringers.

## Communication

A Parish Magazine published 10 times per year, 36-40 pages A5 with news of church and village activities. Current distribution is about 500 copies. The subscription cost is £5 a year. It is a thriving publication and has just received a £250 award.

We publish a weekly pew sheet.

The church has information on the Pirton Website and a dedicated website is planned in the near future.

## Pastoral and Ecumenical

### Children's Work

A weekly Tiny Toes group for babies, toddlers and their carers.

A monthly Little Hands group - craft and activities for the Under 5s.

A monthly Footprints group during Parish Communion and largely run by young Teenagers.

A weekly discussion group for 9-14 year olds.

### Methodists

We have a close relationship with the local Methodist Chapel, which in October 2010 was formally affirmed in our Statement of Shared Values and Hopes. We have regular joint services, share Lent Study Groups, and both our Reader and Reader in Training lead worship at the Chapel as part of the Methodist Circuit Plan.

## United Benefice

The United Benefice Services on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of a month are developing.

## Walden Offa Group

We have been a member of the Walden Offa Group of rural churches since its inception in 1992 and are now associate members. There are several joint events, including an annual service, summer evensongs, occasional training days and other events.

## Leadership



Until October 2010 we had a United Benefice Priest, Revd. Canon John Payne Cook, residing in the vicarage in Pirton.

We have a Reader and a Reader-in-training both of whom live in Pirton.

The PCC comprises 10 members (2 under 35) meeting 6 times per year.

We have various sub committees - standing, stewardship, fabric and churchyard, finance, events group, worship, St Mary's magazine.

## PCC Aims

To refocus its energies from facility expansion and building, back to revitalising the pastoral and evangelistic aspects of our mission.

To stimulate the growth of the church especially amongst young families.

To extend use of the South Transept's new facilities.

## Finance

Christian stewardship is practised through envelopes and Gift Aid.

Our aim is to donate 10% of our planned giving to missions and charities 75% overseas 25% in the UK.

Pirton pays 40% of the Joint Benefice Parish share.

## Expenses of Office

Expenses are reimbursed in full.

There are no secretarial and / or office provisions.

## Strengths and Weaknesses

### **STRENGTHS -**

- Strong lay involvement.
- Monthly family services.
- An openness to various forms of worship.
- The church building is kept open every day and remains an interesting, historic, living symbol of Christian Witness within the village - as it has for over 900 years.
- Strong links and support from the village e.g. the annual Pirton Open Gardens.
- Excellent communication with the village through the St Mary's Parish magazine.
- Increase in bell ringers.

### **WEAKNESSES -**

- Only limited provision for children.
- No regular organist.
- An aging congregation other than at Family Services.
- The choir is getting smaller.
- No children's choir.
- No separate crèche facility.

## Future Priorities

- To deepen the spiritual life of the congregation.
- To develop the use of the newly created 'South Transept'.
- To increase our outreach within the village, especially amongst young families.
- To maintain our close relationship with the Methodist Chapel.
- To expand the musical life of the church.

## New Incumbent Profile

We believe that in order to fulfil the ministry needed in our village it is essential that our new incumbent is:

- Committed to praying with us and for us.
- Willing to develop the spiritual life of the Parish with all age groups.
- Comfortable with being a visible presence, seen to be reaching out into the community and happy to become involved in village life beyond the church.
- Able to aid the development of the United Benefice.
- Willing to maintain a wide range of services.

# The Benefice Vicarage

Crabtree Lane,  
Pirton  
Hertfordshire  
SG5 3QE



Our attractive vicarage was built 25 years ago, and is a spacious well appointed house having five bedrooms, bathroom, study, lounge, separate dining room, kitchen, utility room and garage, It has a large drive with parking space for a further six vehicles. The central heating is gas-fired, with an additional gas fire in the dining room and an open fire in the lounge. Outside to the rear there is a beautiful south facing private garden with small patio.

