Archdeaconry of Hertford
Buntingford Deanery

Profile of

The United Benefice of
Ardeley, Benington, Cottered with Throcking, and Walkern
Welcome
Welcome to our Profile of the United Benefice of Ardeley, Benington, Cottered, Throcking and Walkern. We are five small and geographically distinct village parishes set in the beautiful rural countryside of East Hertfordshire. We are very proud of our beautiful churches and our welcoming congregations, and in the following pages we hope you will find much to interest you in the possibility of becoming our new Priest-In-Charge. Please read on and decide whether we are offering the opportunities you have been looking for!

Contents
Our Vision 1
Our Needs 1
Our Offering 2
Our Strengths 2
Our Weaknesses 2
Our Opportunities 2
Our Challenges 2
Our Benefice 3
Our Rectory 3
Our New Priest-in-Charge 4
Our Parishes 5-18
Ardeley, and St Lawrence Church 5-7
Benington, and St Peter’s Church 8-10
Cottered, and St John The Baptist Church 11-13
Throcking, and Holy Trinity Church 14-15
Walkern, and St Mary’s Church 16-18

Our Vision
Our mission is to share God’s love as we actively reach out to and support each of the five village communities that we serve. Our vision is to continue to be a welcoming and diverse group of rural parishes serving local needs, demonstrating both individually and collectively a Christian witness that is relevant for the 21st century. Our aim is for each of our five parishes to maintain their different traditions of worship, while being open to working more closely together.

Our Needs
We are looking to welcome a Priest-in-Charge who understands the challenges of rural ministry and leading multiple parishes, and can creatively encourage and inspire people of all ages and backgrounds with the love of God in Jesus Christ. You will be:

- a skilled and sensitive communicator, a good mixer, enabler and listener
- an approachable team player and able to lead, delegate, motivate and inspire
- comfortable with upholding several different worship traditions
- open and inclusive in your approach to ministry
Our Offering
In return for what you bring to us, we can offer you:

- Five welcoming and friendly congregations
- Five active and supportive Readers
- Five committed, flexible and supportive PCCs
- An established Local Ecumenical Partnership
- Five beautiful and well-maintained historic churches
- A four bedroom home within a friendly and supportive rural community

Our Strengths
- Five dedicated and hardworking Readers, and established Lay Leaders of Worship
- Caring, faithful and supportive congregations in hospitable village communities
- Hard working PCCs, churchwardens and teams of volunteers in all five parishes
- Five historic churches in beautiful rural locations
- Supportive village organisations and fundraising events
- Strong choral traditions at Ardeley and Walkern, and a choir at Walkern
- Strong links to our Church Schools in Ardeley and Benington, and the village school in Walkern

Our Weaknesses
- Three of the five parishes are currently unable to pay their full Parish Share
- Limited capacity within small rural villages for outreach and church growth
- All aspects of church life are relying on fewer, older people
- We are not nurturing people effectively from baptism to discipleship
- Need to collaborate on websites and develop social media profiles
- Geographical distance between, and lack of collaboration with, our parishes

Our Opportunities
- Increase outreach to, and pastoral support for, the lonely and isolated
- Encourage church growth by conducting baptism during regular services
- Consider closer news interchange between our parish magazines
- Consider reshaping worship to appeal to our wider communities
- Create presentation boards of church and village history for display in our churches
- Consider training more church leaders, or create ministry teams of existing helpers
- Consider joint activities and ways for our five churches to work together

Our Challenges
- Increased burden of Parish Share impacting on savings and meeting running costs
- Role of church in today’s increasingly secular society
- Impact of social media and digital transformation on church life
- Struggle to gain and retain children and young adults
- Increasing social isolation among village residents
- Increasingly ageing local populations with reduced disposable income
Our Benefice
The United Benefice of Ardeley, Benington, Cottered, Throcking and Walkern is part of the Buntingford Deanery within the Archdeaconry of Hertford in the Diocese of St Albans. The Benefice comprises five discrete village parishes in rural East Hertfordshire, and was formed in 2013 when the Benefice of Benington and Walkern was transferred out of Stevenage Deanery and into Buntingford Deanery, and was then combined with the Benefice of Ardeley, Cottered with Broadfield, and Throcking.

Each of our five village parishes has its own sense of community and identity, and its own PCC. However, we all share the aim of making the Gospel of Jesus Christ relevant and accessible to all who live in, work in and visit our villages. For historical and geographical reasons the two parts of the Benefice still tend to operate independently, although joint ministry team meetings are occasionally held and joint services sometimes take place.

Benington and Walkern parishes between them benefit from three Readers, a retired member of the clergy, an active ministry team, membership of a Local Ecumenical Partnership, and a part time administrator. Cottered and Throcking parishes share the services of Cottered’s Reader, while Ardeley parish is supported by its own Reader and a lay member who conducts Evensong services. There are no retired clergy living in Ardeley, Cottered or Throcking, and all administrative support is undertaken by volunteers. However, Ardeley benefits from having a non-resident retired clergyman on its electoral roll, who regularly conducts Eucharist services.

Our communities are all diverse, with varying levels of prosperity and a broad range of age groups represented across the Benefice, although our congregations are generally predominantly elderly. Some of our parishes boast a few shops and businesses, others only a pub, and there are few social facilities and very little public transport. However, fast trains to London and many other retail and commercial opportunities are available in Stevenage and other neighbouring towns. Luton and Stansted airports are both within 30 miles. All our churches are valued as focal points within our communities, and attendance at Christmas, Easter, Remembrance and other festival services is consistently strong.

Our Rectory
The rectory at 1 Warren Lane, Cottered, SG9 9QA is a well-maintained detached home situated opposite the church and close to the centre of the village. The downstairs accommodation comprises an entrance lobby, cloakroom with toilet, hall, study, sitting room, kitchen/diner and utility room. Upstairs there are four bedrooms and a bathroom with separate toilet. The house benefits from oil-fired central heating, a detached single garage, a car port, and further off-street parking for 3 to 4 cars. A pleasant garden faces the church to one side, and overlooks farmland to the rear.
Our New Priest-in-Charge
Our Benefice is seeking a new Priest-in-Charge who:

- has their own reliable transport and a full, clean driving license
- can minister to the needs of our geographically distant communities
- will maintain the different traditions of worship within each of our five churches
- is a strategic thinker willing to seek and identify new ideas for development
- has strong organisational skills and an ability to communicate at all levels
- has proven leadership skills and a desire to lead and manage effective teams
- is committed to encouraging children and young people
- can encourage and develop mission within our villages
- fosters good working relationships with a strong sense of humour

The successful candidate will help us to maintain and develop interest and involvement within each of our five parishes, through:

- collaborative ministry involving Readers and Lay Leaders of Worship
- identifying and exploring new avenues of mission and outreach
- supporting the development of ministry to children and young people
- taking an active role in our church schools in Ardeley and Benington
- facilitating pastoral care for the elderly, sick and bereaved
- being actively involved in the wider parishes as the visible face of the Church

Thank you for reading our Benefice Profile. If you would like to have an informal conversation about this position, please contact The Venerable Janet Mackenzie, Archdeacon of Hertford at archdhert@stalbans.anglican.org or 01727 818159.

The post is open to ordained clergy within the Church of England. Appointment is subject to a satisfactory Enhanced DBS disclosure.
ARDELEY

Our Community
Ardeley Parish has a population of approximately 425, and includes Cromer, Wood End, Moor Green, Luffenhall and parts of Hare Street and Cromer Mill. Historically an agricultural community, Ardeley has become a highly desirable area for commuters, a fact reflected in house prices. It has been increasingly difficult for young people to afford houses here with the result that we have perhaps a disproportionate number of middle aged and retired people. Most housing is owner occupied.

Ardeley has its own Parish Council in the East Herts District. Ardeley also has a Village Hall controlled by the PCC, with the Church having free use of the facilities. The involvement of the Church with the local community plays a vital role in maintaining its identity, providing a focal point for social and support activities. Ardeley has an active Women’s Institute, and a Leisure Club which meets fortnightly.

A monthly parish magazine, Forum, is delivered to every house in the Parish. The magazine owns a high capacity photocopier which is made available for photocopying, at cost, for the parish. “The Link”, a weekly newsheet providing details of hymns, readings and notices, is distributed to Ardeley, Cottered and Throcking.

Our School
Ardeley has a Church of England, Voluntary Aided, primary school with approximately 80 pupils. The last SIAMS report was ‘Outstanding’ and the OFSTED report was ‘Good’.

The relationship between church and school in Ardeley is very strong and the PCC supports the school financially. A termly eucharist is held at the church and the incumbent leads a weekly Collective Worship at the school. The church and school often work closely together in fund-raising activities.

On leaving Ardeley school, older children either enter the middle school system in Buntingford at Year 5, or the secondary school system in Baldock at Year 7.
St. Lawrence Church

Our Mission
Our priorities are to maintain and increase local interest and involvement in our church; to show it clearly and actively relevant to the lives and beliefs of local people; to uphold the traditional practice and roles of our churches locally.

Our Worship
St Lawrence has a long standing Central Catholic tradition, with the use of vestments and incense, which it wishes to continue. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved. BCP Evening Prayer is said every Sunday, led by a Churchwarden.

During vacancies, the Ardeley congregation joins the parish communion service at Cottered on the 1st Sunday of the month. A Common Worship Eucharist is held on the 2nd and 3rd Sunday of the month with a quarterly family orientated, less formal Eucharist, with children taking part in the Liturgy. On the 4th Sunday an informal non-Eucharistic service of Family worship has been introduced with children in attendance throughout: the Ardeley Music group begins this service with a reflective piece of music, and the children enjoy this participation. On other Sundays, Little Fishes (Junior Church), with up to five children, is held in the Village Hall with the children joining the main service after the Peace and demonstrating their work before the Blessing. On fifth Sundays, Ardeley takes turns with Cottered and Throcking to host a "Group Service" for all three churches.

Our People
The Parish has a Reader, Wendy Waygood, plus servers, intercessors, readers and chalice assistants. We also have a non-resident retired clergyman on our electoral roll, who regularly conducts Eucharistic services. St Lawrence also has a Family Outreach group which explores new ways to attract families into the church services, and contacts all families in the parish, encouraging them to join us at services.

The bells are rung regularly. Baptisms, weddings and funerals vary in number but rarely exceed three per year of each. Special services are held for Mothering Sunday, Good Friday Family Service, Remembrance Sunday, Patronal Festival, Harvest, All Souls, Christingle and a Crib Service. There is no choir, but the church has a strong singing tradition with a musical setting of the Eucharist, and the congregation help to choose the hymns.

Average attendance is 26. There are 39 members on the Electoral Roll, of whom 12 are non-resident. The congregation in total numbers about 54 and the age range of the congregation is roughly 17% under 18, 48% aged 18 – 69, and 35% over 69 years of age.
As is often the case with rural communities, there is still an expectation of Clerical visiting which is especially welcomed at times of illness and bereavement. Our Reader helps with this task and with some preparation and follow-up work for baptisms and funerals. A few members of the congregation undertake pastoral visiting but this is not widespread.

Members of other Christian denominations are welcomed and worship regularly in our churches. Ardeley Parish does not offer paid admin support but members of the congregation make themselves available to undertake administrative tasks when delegated. Ardeley also has a dedicated Safeguarding Officer

Our Building
Ardeley undertook major repairs in the region of £200,000 during 2007 mainly providing repairs to the roof and south aisle with further repairs to the Tower in 2018. The quinquennial inspection, next due in 2020, directs our priorities. Minor repairs and routine maintenance are carried out by volunteers and a local contractor.

Our Finances
The general fund runs with a theoretical positive balance with all excesses of income over expenditure being saved in an earmarked account for building repairs. An income of about £22,000 is considered the norm. There is an active Gift Aid scheme with 17 participants producing about 50% of income. Approximately 10% of income is devoted to mission and charity. Parish Share has been paid in full for many years: in 2018 this amounted to £14,127 and. St Lawrence PCC pays 25% of the incumbent’s expenses of office.

How Can You Help Us?
One of our weaknesses is a gradual increase in the average age of the congregation and the inability to retain the commitment of young people as they enter adolescence and this has featured strongly in our Mission Action Plan. As a result, three young people have been taught bell-ringing recently and a quarterly “Family” Eucharist has been introduced.

Our Reader is keen to be involved in collaborative ministry. Members of the congregation would welcome the opportunity to become involved in administrative and pastoral work and to develop the necessary skills. We would also like to see a commitment to pastoral care, with a particular interest in supporting the development of ministry to children and young people with a willingness to take an active role in our Church School. In return the parish will affirm and support the new incumbent in their ministry.

What Can We Offer You?
Among our strengths are the loyalty, optimism and devotion of the worshipping congregation in supporting all the activities of the Church. There is also a guarded willingness to undertake change while maintaining all that is good from the past.
BENINGTON

Our Community
Benington Parish is the second largest parish in the Benefice with approximately 1,000 residents. It has very mixed housing stock, mainly centred around the village Green, St. Peter’s church, The Bell public house and extending about one mile towards Hertford to include the Methodist Chapel, the Lordship Arms public house and the homes in Burns Green and Hebing End.

Newcomers are warmly welcomed into the life of the village and the Church by members of the Pastoral Care Team. There is a very lively community centred around the Village Hall, which is owned by the Diocese and leased to Benington Village Hall Management Committee with the PCC as Trustees. Many groups meet there ranging from the Art Club to the Whist Club with very many in between! The most popular is the weekly Thursday Coffee Morning which starts with school mums and pre-schoolers meeting for coffee and cakes who are then joined by all ages until 11.30.

Once a month a Lunch Club follows the coffee morning where 60-70 lunches are cooked on site by a dedicated mixed team of residents; some meals are also delivered to anyone unable to attend. The meal is always preceded by a prayer of thanks and provides an invaluable link between regular church goers, the once-a-month-church-goers and the once in a blue moon church-goers of any denomination!

We have a popular monthly Parish magazine, which is delivered or posted to subscribers which provides service information, news of clubs and events in the village and provides an annual income of approx. £1,000 for the Church.

Our School
We have close links with Benington Church of England Primary School. There are currently 104 pupils, the SIAMS report in 2018 gave an ‘Outstanding’ grade and the OFSTED report in 2018 was ‘Good’. The school mission statement is ‘Inspiring pupils to reach their full potential in our Christian family, through trust, equality, respect and care for all’. There are 2 Foundation Governors from our worshipping community on the Governing Body.
St. Peter’s Church

Our Mission
There are close links within the Local Ecumenical Partnership, comprising St. Peter’s, St. Mary’s Walkern, the Methodist Church in Benington and the United Reformed Church in Walkern. Ministry team members are regularly invited to take services at the URC and the Methodist Churches, and we plan some joint services together each year. We have a Facebook page and a joint website with St. Mary’s, Walkern.

Our Worship
The style of worship at Benington is in the low church/evangelical tradition. Vestments are never worn and there is no expectation of a deacon role in the liturgy. Our regular service pattern, which may change slightly during the vacancy:

1st Sunday 11am Parish Communion
2nd Sunday 8am Book of Common Prayer Communion
           11am Family Service led by a Lay Leader of Worship
3rd Sunday 8am Book of Common Prayer Communion
           10:30am Communion Service with Methodists at Methodist Chapel
4th Sunday 11am Parish Communion or Open Worship led by a Lay Leader of Worship
5th Sunday 11am Churches together in Benington & Walkern (rotational)

Our monthly Saturday Club, for children from 4 - 11 year olds, is run by an enthusiastic team and attended by around 22 enthusiastic children! We have a Bible story, games, crafts, singing and always enjoy eating tea together. Children participate in the Family Service the following day.

Our People
Average worshipping community is 52 adults, average attendance at 8am service is 10, 25 (and 1 dog) at 11am Parish Communion at Family Service and 45 (25 adults, 20 children under 11). There are 51 names on the Electoral Roll.

Attendance in 2018
- Christmas Carol service attendance 160
- Christmas Day communicants = 35 attendance total 45
- Maundy Thursday Supper (Ecumenical Service) = 35
- Good Friday Meditation =15
- Easter Day communicants = 42 attendance total 71.
- 9 funeral services, (3 burials in churchyard, 6 interment of ashes)
- 8 baptisms
- 1 wedding (7 taken place or booked in 2019)
Our PCC comprises 6 lay and 6 ex-officio members. We are lucky enough to have 1 retired but very active Baptist Minister, 1 Reader, 3 Lay Leaders of Worship, and 2 churchwardens alongside the Treasurer, Secretary, and a designated Safeguarding Officer. St Peter’s has an established pastoral care team. We also share a part-time parish administrator with St. Mary’s Walkern.

**Our Building**
There has been a place of worship on the site of the present church since the time of Beortwulf (d. 852). The present church building dates from the early 14th century and is mostly in a good state of repair except for the side chapel. There is a very fine tower of 8 bells that has a rich history in bell-ringing in Hertfordshire. The church is open and unlocked every day in daylight hours (mostly).

**Our Finances**
Income for 2018 was £56,199 and expenditure was £47,448. Our Parish Share contribution of £18,036 was paid in full. We have recently been left a legacy which will be used to fund outstanding repairs to the church and the building of a small extension to the church to create a Vestry/Parish Office. St Peter’s PCC pays 25% of the incumbent’s expenses of office.

**How Can You Help Us?**
We are looking for an incumbent who will make a real difference within our communities, who will lead and guide us working towards our vision to be seen as a Church that continues to respond to the needs of the community it serves and that is preparing for succeeding generations to continue the work of transformation.
COTTERED

Our Community
Cottered is a small rural parish in North East Hertfordshire with a population of approximately 450, approximately 5, 10, 15 and 25 minutes drive respectively to the other Benefice parishes of Throcking, Ardeley, Walkern and Benington. The rectory, a four bedroom detached house with garage and gardens, is situated opposite the church.

Our friendly village is famous for its privately owned Japanese Gardens. We have a popular pub serving great food, and a modern Village Hall offering a variety of activities including carpet bowls and a lunch club. An active pétanque club, a horticultural society and a community choir are just some of the many thriving groups that meet regularly and organise social events. A bi-monthly parish magazine is distributed to most households in the village.

The majority of residents are older professionals or retired. There is no school in the village so younger children either attend Ardeley primary school or one of the Buntingford primary schools. Older children either enter the middle school system in Buntingford at Year 5, or the secondary school system in Baldock at Year 7.

The parish of Cottered is represented by its own councillor on East Herts District Council, while the civil Parish Council is combined with Throcking Parish. A limited bus service runs through Cottered between Stevenage and Stansted Airport. A rail link from Stevenage, approximately 25 minutes drive away, provides fast train services north to Edinburgh and south to London and Brighton via Kings Cross St Pancras.

St John the Baptist Church

Our Mission
We aim to be a church that seeks to engage with the community, responds positively to its needs and best aspirations, and shared the Gospel by word and example.

Our Worship
The style of worship at St John the Baptist is easy-going and low church, based on Common Worship, and we wish to continue this tradition. Members of other Christian denominations are welcomed and worship regularly at Cottered, and children are encouraged to attend services. Members of the friendly and approachable congregation
participate in writing intercessions, reading lessons and offering the chalice during services, and organise refreshments in the church after each service.

During the vacancy, our parish communion service on the 1st Sunday is joined by members of the Ardeley congregation. Relaxed non-communion Village Worship services are taken by the Reader. Parish communions are either taken by the incumbent, a visiting member of the clergy, or as a "Shared Communion" (Communion by Extension) taken by the Reader. On 5th Sundays, Cottered takes turns with Ardeley and Throcking to host a service for all three congregations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Service Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Sunday</td>
<td>11am Parish Communion, joined by Ardeley Congregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Sunday</td>
<td>11am Village Worship (non communion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Sunday</td>
<td>No Service - 11am Parish Communion at Throcking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Sunday</td>
<td>11am Parish Communion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Sunday</td>
<td>11am at Cottered or Throcking, or 9:30 am at Ardeley (rotational)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Services are held for festivals including Mothering Sunday and Remembrance Sunday, while special midweek services include a Patronal Festival and All Souls. During the Christmas period, Christingle and Christmas Carol Services are popular events, with the most popular being the Christmas Eve Crib Service taken by the Reader. The bells are rung for special services.

Our People

Average attendance at services is 16, and the average age of the congregation is approximately 75. There are no other clergy living in the parish. Our Reader, Dr Barry Price, has lived in the parish and been closely involved in all Cottered church activities since 1992, assisting the incumbent by conducting services and funerals and undertaking pastoral care visits. Erika Price (Churchwarden) and Neville Chuck (Organist) are holders of the Bishop’s Certificate of Learning, with authorisation to take morning and evening prayer services as necessary. We have a designated Safeguarding Officer.

The electoral roll comprises 19 members. Cottered PCC meets every 10 to 12 weeks, and comprises seven members plus the incumbent and the Reader. Baptisms, weddings and funerals vary in number but rarely exceed three of each in any one year. Due to the ageing population an increasing number of funerals are being held in the church and at Harwood Park Crematorium, Stevenage.
The Friends of Cottered Church organises several social occasions each year to raise much-needed funds, while Cottered Village Appreciation Society help with mowing and maintaining the churchyard. The recently created Church Co-ordination Committee acts as a bridge between these two organisations and the church, to establish and maintain communication links with parishioners who do not attend church, or do so infrequently. A bell ringing group has recently been revived, and members successfully raised funds to install a sixth bell in the church tower to complete the peal.

Our Building
Our ancient church is open and unlocked every day and receives many visitors. The church itself is in reasonable repair, although the last quinquennial report suggests that a major programme of renovation work is required within the next five years. Lead was stolen from the roof for the 4th time in 2018, and for the 2nd time in 18 months, and the PCC are in discussions with the DAC to replace the roof with a non-metal material. There is an effective sound system with hearing loop facility, and an efficient central heating system. A project is currently being progressed to install a disabled access toilet and new kitchen facilities, funded by recent legacies and with assistance from the Friends of Cottered church.

Our Finances
Stewardship is practised through direct debit, an envelope scheme and collection from services. Average annual income is in the region of £21,000 while expenditure in 2018 was approximately £20,000. Recent legacies amounting to £15,000 are earmarked for the toilet project which is now progressing, while other Restricted Funds are in the region of £79,000. St John the Baptist PCC pays 22.5% of the incumbent’s expenses of office.

How Can You Help Us?
Our challenges include our ageing congregation and resulting decline in income, combined with an increasingly high parish share burden and the inability to attract newcomers, younger people and children to church.

What Can We Offer You?
Among our many strengths are:

- the invaluable enthusiasm and expertise of our hard-working Reader
- genuine warmth and hospitality from a welcoming community
- the loyalty, optimism and support of our worshipping congregation
- a strong sense of community with the parish church at its very heart
- half of our village residents attend church at least once a year
- a willing and hard-working PCC
- the full support of other village organisations
THROCKING

Our Community
Throcking is a tiny rural farming community in North East Hertfordshire, with a population of approximately 45, located approximately 1.5 miles east of Cottered. It is the furthest east of the five Benefice parishes, being approximately 5, 15, 20 and 30 minutes drive respectively from Cottered, Ardeley, Walkern and Benington along winding country lanes.

Most residents are retired, and many properties are second homes. There is no school with few (if any) children, and there are no leisure facilities. The community is not served by any public transport. Throcking is represented by its own councillor on East Herts District Council, although a single Parish Council serves the combined civil parish of Cottered and Throcking.

Holy Trinity Church

Our Mission
Our aim is to keep our tiny church going and to maintain regular, meaningful worship which draws our declining and ageing population closer to God.

Our Worship
The tradition at Holy Trinity Church is a simple rural low-church style based on Common Worship, and we wish to continue in this vein. Members of other faiths and other Christian denominations are welcomed, and are frequent attendees, at Throcking services.

Prior to 2018, two services took place each month at Throcking. For logistical reasons, this had to be reduced to one Common Worship parish communion a month. The service is taken by the incumbent or Reader, and held at 11am on the 3rd Sunday each month. The congregation is joined by worshippers from Cottered, giving an average attendance of 13. The average age of the congregation is approximately 75.

Additional services are conducted by the Reader on Easter Sunday and on Christmas Day, and on the fifth Sunday in the month Throcking takes turns with Ardeley and Cottered to host a “Group Service” for all three churches.

Our People
There are no other clergy in Throcking parish. Cottered’s Reader, Dr Barry Price, has been closely involved in all Throcking church activities since 1992, assisting the incumbent by conducting communion by extension services, funerals and undertaking pastoral care
visits. During the past five years there have been a handful of funerals and weddings, and no baptisms. The electoral roll comprises 5 members. Throcking PCC meets informally after church services, and the PCC comprises three members plus the incumbent. We have a designated Safeguarding Officer.

Our Building
Holy Trinity Church is in reasonable repair, although the last quinquennial report suggests that significant renovation work is likely to be required within the next five years. The organ is in desperate need of an overhaul, for which there are no funds available, and an upgrade to the heating system is highly desirable.

Our Finances
Maximum annual income is in the region of £2,000, achieved through direct debit and collection from services, with occasional donations. Annual running costs of approximately £1,250 have been pared to the bone, and include a 2.5% contribution to the incumbent’s expenses of office. However, including Parish Share of £3,256, our annual expenditure is more than double that which our income can feasibly support. Holy Trinity PCC has no assets or investments to assist with upkeep of the church. Restricted Funds are in the region of £4,000, income from which maintains specific graves in the churchyard.

How Can You Help Us?
The annual accounts imbalance, the small and declining population, the increasingly high average age of the congregation, and the lack of young people in the parish are all identified weaknesses.

What Can We Offer You?
There is a very strong commitment within the Throcking community and the congregation to maintain monthly services at this remote and beautiful church.
WALKERN

Our Community
Walkern is about 4 miles from the town of Stevenage and is the largest of the five parishes in the Benefice with a population of nearly 2000. There is a variety of housing, including affordable homes and some new building, as well as a busy shop, several small businesses and award-winning Tea Rooms. There is a thriving county primary school, a playgroup and toddler groups.

A wide range of groups caters for different interests and there is a strong sense of community spirit. The ‘Walkern Journal’ developed from a parish magazine and still has a lot of input from clergy and church events. The village playground has recently won an award for its renovation of the playing and meeting area.

St Mary’s Church

Our Mission
Our aim as a church is to keep Christ at the centre of our community, and the pastoral needs of such a community are varied and demanding. By maintaining regular, meaningful worship which draws people closer to God, we hope to be a place where people can learn more about spiritual things in a welcoming and encouraging way.

Through our involvement with our community, we hope to establish friendships and ways of showing care and concern which will encourage everyone to turn to God in times of celebration and joy, and also in times of sadness and need. We hope to grow in number so that the work of the church can be shared out amongst a wider group. We have a Facebook page and share a joint website with St. Peter’s, Benington.

Our Worship
The style of worship at St Mary’s is moderate catholic, with the wearing of vestments and robed servers.

Special services include Evensong, Taize worship and celebrations of the Christian year, particularly Christmas, Remembrance Sunday, etc. which attract a large congregation from the village.
Our People
On our electoral roll we have 57 members, with an average attendance of 30 at our main services. Most of us who attend are involved in reading, serving, welcoming or assisting worship in some way. Our choir (10+ at most services) is ably led by our organist, who is also developing a youth orchestra who play at our monthly all-age worship.

Our Building
We are very proud of our beautiful and historic church building which has housed worship since Saxon times. In particular, we have some connections with the Magna Carta, a fact which was the centre of great celebration in 2015 and sparked the creation of several groups – Walkern History Society, Twinning with Lanvallay (France) and Walkern Players – all of which have close links to St Mary’s.

As well as the historic aspect of our church, we were delighted in 2016 when we were able to have kitchen and toilet facilities built into the north-west corner which has enabled us to use the building for a much wider variety of purposes, including fund-raising concerts and Christmas Tree Festivals, Open Sundays, rehearsals and performances by Walkern Players and many others. The church hosts services for Walkern Primary School on festive occasions. St Mary’s has also been the space where our recent project ‘Life Stories’ has displayed the large photographs and individual books telling the stories of people with long association with the village, an occasion which culminated in a service of music and readings.

Our Finances
St Mary’s PCC pays 25% of the incumbent’s expenses of office.

How Can You Help Us?
• with vision: we need to be reminded of the priorities when the day to day problems of maintenance, organisation and disappointment distract us
• with encouragement: being a visible presence in our parish who knows and welcomes all, demonstrating a concern and involvement in our activities, and being willing to direct positive change
• with empowering: in a 5 church Benefice, we are learning to take on responsibilities which used to be the work of the incumbent; direction and clear delegation would enable us to support this work with greater confidence and efficiency
What Can We Offer You?
Within our congregation we have:

- two hard-working Readers, who take responsibility for leading services, especially our Elevenses All-Age service, planning mission and implementing diocesan strategies (MAP)
- a Lay Leader of Worship who has led services of the Word and chairs the Pastoral and Welcome committee
- a skilled organist who plans and directs all our special worship services and organises the music of our regular worship
- an enthusiastic and supportive choir
- a loyal team of bell ringers
- a willing and hard-working PCC who have made major decisions on the ongoing maintenance and ordering of the church
- a reliable and helpful team of sidespersons
- a generous and friendly group of people who will be happy to welcome someone who comes to lead and guide us in our Christian life.