Welcome to the Parish of Letchworth. Thank you for your interest and for taking the time to consider our Parish as your possible future home and place of vocation.

As you read through this profile, it will be apparent that our Parish has faced and will continue to face challenges but we have had our successes and wish to build on these as we go forward into our future.

We are looking for someone to guide and lead us into that future; someone to inspire and motivate our modest-sized congregation; to help us grow in discipleship and to re-invigorate our purpose and mission within the local and broader community – in short to help us Live God’s Love.
Our New Priest

- We need someone who is passionate and will work with us to undertake the task of revitalizing a Parish that, for some years, has struggled to balance declining numbers and reduced income against overheads and the commitment to mission.
- We need someone who will actively engage with a broad range of tradition and worship styles that are relevant for daily life.
- We need someone who is energetic, resilient and self-motivated; someone with the vision to help us grow in discipleship, outreach and mission and with the skills to make it happen.
- We need a priest who will be committed to developing ecumenical relationships; a good communicator at all levels who will develop a good working relationship with churches of all denominations in Letchworth.
- We need someone who will embrace fully the social diversity within our parish and local community.
- We need a priest who is a good listener and compassionate; someone who recognizes the needs of individual groups and someone who can guide and nurture the needs of the individual.
- We need a good preacher with a commitment to time spent in prayer to help others deepen their spiritual lives.
- And we need a priest with a good sense of humour – because we are asking for a lot.

“One word sums up what is important - LOVE. My love for the church and its history, and for the people who worship there and the love I feel reaching out to me in welcome and fellowship”

Parishioner 2018
Who we are: our strengths, weaknesses and values

We are very positive and excited by our future. The churchwardens and members of the PCC are united by a fundamental desire to be supportive of one another and, to take seriously, the true meaning and breadth of inclusivity and diversity.

We strive to create worship in which God touches and changes our lives. We include a variety of styles so that all ages can share in prayer, worship and spiritual growth.

We are not and never have been a Resolution Parish. Therefore, we will not be petitioning the Bishop of St. Albans to appoint a male and we would wish our new priest to welcome the priestly and sacramental ministry of women.

Whilst there is a small number of our congregation who do not accept the ministry of women, the majority would be positively welcoming.

"Having a shared purpose and worshipping together. I come to church as it’s my spiritual home, I have my spiritual food"
Parishioner 2018

We may be ‘divided’ into two physical congregations, each with different styles of worship but our overriding and binding passion is for our Parish to work together as Jesus Christ would want – as one, with one aim – to live God’s love and make our Parish relevant for today. We wish to develop and broaden our outlook, grow in discipleship and mission to meet the needs of our Parish and community.

"We are so lucky to have two wonderful churches whose ways of worship are not so different to one another our shared beliefs are the same"
Parishioner 2018
We acknowledge that we are cash poor and heavily in debt to the Diocese bearing a heavy shortfall in our payment of the Parish share, but we have a hard working and conscientious team with a great desire to turn this around.

In our pastoral team, we have a Reader who is also a member of the PCC.

We also have a member of the PCC who is currently discerning a possible vocation to ordination.

In our PCC, we also have two Churchwardens, a Secretary, a Treasurer and a Planned-Giving Officer, with other elected officers taking responsibility for Safeguarding, Health and Safety and Data Protection. Other elected members each bring their initiative, collective and individual responsibility, to the monthly meetings.

A Standing Committee comprising the Churchwardens, Secretary and Treasurer meets monthly prior to each meeting of the PCC.

We have two representatives on Deanery Synod and the two churchwardens attend Synod, ex-officio.

We are conscious that we have few children and young adults in our congregation – not enough to run a Sunday School. Our monthly Messy Church meetings provide an alternative style of worship for younger members (and anyone) of our congregation. Messy Church also attracts children and their parents from outside the Parish that would otherwise not be regular members of our congregation.

Our young parishioners do love to be involved in our acts of worship and have recently come onto our Parish rota and embraced the roles of sides-person and Offertory as well as becoming members of the serving team.

We have built strong and caring relationships within and without our church walls. Presently this works well, as an ad hoc arrangement. We have close relationships with, and support groups and individuals in, our local Hospice, Nursing Home and those who need care in their homes. We
wish to build on this and are eager to develop an informed and dedicated Pastoral Team to support the Lay administration of Communion and to organize care for the bereaved.

“We continue to build relationships in the local community, as at St. Catherine’s. Build stronger relationships with the people who use our Church Hall. Show our presence in the town centre, so that we spread God’s love to the people we meet.”

Parishioner 2018

We enjoy social times together and the Parish unites to celebrate lunches at Harvest and Christmas in the Parish Hall. We also enjoy flower festivals and Christmas tree festivals in the Parish church, and smaller gatherings of afternoon tea and modest Lenten and Shrovetide lunches in one another’s homes.

On Christmas Eve we take our Carol Singing with us into Letchworth Hall Hotel and St. Catherine’s Nursing Home.

Our ‘60+ Group’ offers a varied programme each month throughout the year, organizing illustrated talks, outings, lunches, teas and worship. We are grateful to the Letchworth Heritage Foundation that provides transport for members living outside the Parish and non-congregants.

Where is Letchworth Garden City

Letchworth Garden City is located in North Hertfordshire, about 35 miles to the north of London with good rail connections to the capital and Cambridge. The A1M passes through the edge of town giving easy access to neighbouring towns and beyond. Both Luton and Stansted airports are in easy travelling distance.

Letchworth was developed as the First Garden City, in 1903, initially laid out by the architect, Raymond Unwin, on the principles of the Quaker entrepreneur, Ebenezer Howard. It was created from three hamlets each with its own Church: Letchworth, St. Mary; Willian, All Saints; and Norton, St. Nicholas. As the new Garden City attracted people to live, work and
take their leisure, each needed an additional church to accommodate the burgeoning population. Consequently, William built St. Paul’s, Norton, St. George’s and Letchworth, St. Michael’s that became the Parish Church of Letchworth, in 1967. Into this mix, St. Thomas’s was built when the Wilbury area was developed, making a total of seven Church of England churches within Letchworth Garden City.

The seven churches are part of a ‘Group Ministry’ but in recent years the relationships between the churches have not been as strong as they could be. With recent changes of clergy in all but one of the churches, and a desire in the deanery to support greater cooperation and support between the churches in Letchworth and its neighbouring town of Stotfold, we are looking forward to developing deeper relationships with our sister churches.

Letchworth today has a population of about 33,600 and since its foundation, the Garden City has seen many housing developments. From a core of prestigious, architect-designed, Arts and Crafts houses, estates for social housing have been built at The Grange, Jackmans and off the Spring Road area and private developments built at Lordship and Manor Park. Letchworth Garden City continues to develop housing to fit and fulfill the needs of the community.

The Garden City offers children and parents a choice of twelve primary schools, two state secondary schools and two independent schools.

The local authority is North Hertfordshire District Council. Many aspects of local life are managed and supported by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation which has a large input into maintaining the ideals of the Garden City’s founding principles and has a huge impact on the natural and cultural environment and local activities.

The City has a four-screen cinema that has recently been modified to include a theatre with an impressive and varied programme. It also has an outdoor swimming pool, a leisure centre, sports clubs and sports grounds, including facilities for football, hockey, cricket, tennis, bowls and croquet.

There are a multitude of clubs and societies covering a wide range of activities: from music (choirs and orchestras) to arts and crafts, from clog dancing to speaking Russian, walking, running and cycling. Many of these activities are organized under the umbrella of the Letchworth Arts and Leisure Group (LALG). Similarly, the Settlement also offers recreational courses and some vocational courses leading to recognised qualification.

For those just wanting a stroll, we have Norton Common and the thirteen-mile Greenway that encircles the Garden City.

In 2002, Letchworth was voted the seventh most desirable and safe place to live in England.
The Parish

The Parish lies in the southwest of the Garden City and is blessed with two churches each offering a distinctive style of worship. The population of the Parish is approximately 6,500.

The medieval church of St. Mary lies at the heart of the original hamlet of Letchworth. To the rear of the church, our closest neighbour is Letchworth Hall Hotel. Opposite the church across Letchworth Lane, are the substantial, owner-occupier houses of Manor Park whose residents are predominantly professional or retired-professional. Many long-standing residents may be considered asset rich but cash poor.

In contrast, St. Michael’s is located in the town centre, adjacent to the Town Gardens, the location for many of the town’s community social events. Whilst situated on the corner of Broadway, one of the most affluent roads in the Garden City, the area west of the church is bordered by a mix of social-housing and privately rented or owned properties with a broad mix of socio-economic residents. The commercial and retail heart of the town lies to north of the church, with some residential flats above the shop premises and new development of apartments for the-over-55s.

Electoral Roll

At the most recent Annual Parochial Council Meeting we numbered eighty on the Electoral Roll of whom 52 are resident in the Parish and the remaining 28 non-resident, either living in the neighbouring parishes of Norton and Willian, or as far afield as Clifton and Luton.

We have experienced the loss of nine longstanding members of the congregation who have died recently and over the past two years the numbers on the Electoral Roll have dropped from 91.

Our present members fall into the following age groups: 18-30 years (2); 30-50 years (24); 50-70 years (21); 70+ years (33). Since the last Electoral Roll one member has moved away from the area and another has died.

As a Parish we know and understand that growing in discipleship is fundamental to our future and is our greatest wish and ambition.
The Parish Buildings

St. Mary the Virgin: The present church, the oldest building in Letchworth Garden City, is dated circa 1120 and stands on the site of an earlier Anglo-Saxon building, recorded in the Domesday Book. The church and its history are interwoven with the adjacent Manor House, (now Letchworth Hall Hotel) and the families that resided there throughout its history.

St. Mary’s is a simple aisleless-church with a seating capacity of forty-eight. It has been credited with having the smallest nave in the county; the chancel is a later 13th century addition.

The building’s Grade II listing belies the hidden treasures that have recently been discovered. During restoration work, rare medieval ship graffiti, both incised and drawn, were uncovered in the south porch. An accredited conservator and the local authority archeologist, each made a full survey of the graffiti. Subsequently, new glass, protective doors were installed this year. During the same restoration programme, frescoes were partially uncovered on the eastern face of the chancel arch; these were recovered with lime wash and it is hoped research will be carried out on these in the future. St. Mary’s has no inherent building problems and any maintenance, suggested in the Quinquennial Report, or that otherwise arises, is dealt with promptly.

The Friends of St. Mary’s was founded in 2011 with the aim to maintain the fabric of the building and support initiatives. The Trustees of the Friends and its Patron (seen left with Bishop Alan) meet two or three times a year to discuss projects and organize fundraising events. Future projects in the pipeline include the installation of handrails at the chancel steps and replacement of the external noticeboards.

St. Mary’s sits in a quiet beautifully maintained churchyard (closed). In 2000, a Garden of Remembrance was laid out in the northeast corner for the interment of ashes.

The beauty and history of the church attracts many people and is regularly visited as an educational resource by the local primary school and by adult history groups. In 2018, the building and history of St. Mary’s was the subject of a thesis (as yet unpublished) by a Cambridge post-graduate student.
St. Michael the Archangel: The building was dedicated in 1967 and celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in January 2017. It replaced a temporary hall-church that had served the new Garden City, in Norton Way South, (now demolished). The new building was designed by Laurence King and seats about 220 congregants and choir, with an intimate Blessed Sacrament Chapel on the north side that seats a further 18 worshippers.

The design of St. Michael’s took shape out of the Liturgical Movement, following Vatican II, when it was considered more appropriate and inclusive to construct a centrally planned space for worship.

Sadly, practice and practicalities have not matched the theory, added to which the building was largely experimental in design and in its use of materials. The ten-sided space is ‘held’ together by six panels of stained glass that similarly used a non-traditional method to fix the coloured glass.

Inspections of the fabric of the building prove that inadequate materials were used during construction; for example, the copper roofing is thinner than the copper specified in the original drawings and the building has leaked from the outset. The construction of the drainpipes, concealed within the fabric of the walls, may hide a multitude of problems.

But whilst the building has been a heavy drain on time and resources, since it was built, there are some positive aspects worthy of mention. The organ is widely acknowledged as being very fine and the acoustics of the interior provide a perfect venue for orchestral and choral performances.

Whilst the interior layout is far from perfect and the ceiling far from beautiful, the church does have two lavatories, a small kitchen and a choristers’ vestry at the rear of the church. An area has been made available for parents with small children to use during services, within the body of the church.

The building is surrounded by lawns with some trees and shrubs and a flower border.

The most recent Quinquennial Report (2014) listed several urgent and not-so-urgent matters to be addressed. Two of the most urgent (and costly) have been addressed: a new boiler has been installed and a waterproof membrane has been applied to the roof. Much remains to be done and it would be a relief to focus on mission and outreach rather than constantly addressing the demise of bricks and mortar.

With all its faults, the church exterior has an imposing presence and the internal space is beautifully proportioned and was much admired when the town was visited by the 20th Century Society.
The Parish Hall: was also designed by Laurence King and was dedicated in 1977. It lies adjacent to the Parish Church, across the car park (a public amenity). It serves both the parishioners and the local community and is hired out each weekday and evening for regular bookings, ranging from yoga, toddler groups and Weightwatchers.

At weekends the hall is a popular venue for family parties and is also regularly used as a place of worship by local congregations of the Buddhist and Hindu faiths.

There is a small kitchen fitted with a full size oven and an industrial dishwasher, a storeroom for chairs and a trolley of tables. There are toilets, with provision for the disabled and baby-changing facilities.

The Parish Office Administrator has an office in the Parish Hall and the office is open three mornings of each week.

The Rectory: is an attractive and substantial detached house, built in the 1920s. It is located in a desirable road, close to the town centre and a five minute walk to St. Michael’s church. St. Mary’s is about five minutes away by car. The house comprises three reception rooms, (one is used as a study) a kitchen and utility area, a cloakroom and a downstairs lavatory complete the downstairs. Upstairs there are four bedrooms and a family bathroom.

Outside, there is a double garage with room for further parking on the drive plus a substantial garden backing onto allotments.

“We love our churches, warts and all”  
Parishioner 2018
Worship

Sunday worship is held every Sunday at both churches.

9.00 am  Parish Eucharist (said) at St. Mary’s
Common Worship; Order One; traditional language;
New English Hymnal; vestments; no incense.

10.30 am  Parish Eucharist (sung) at St. Michael’s
Common Worship; Order One; contemporary language
New English Hymnal; vestments; incense.

We observe all major feasts, festivals and observances and often use a special Order of Service where appropriate. Some Major Feasts days, such as Palm Sunday are celebrated as a United Service in the Parish Church.

The Patronal Festivals of St. Mary and St. Michael are normally celebrated, on the day, with Group Evensong or, should either feast fall on a Saturday, a Eucharist Service, at noon, followed by refreshments.

Baptisms take place at both churches and are always incorporated into our Sunday Worship with the congregation present. During the calendar year, 2017, there were 3 Baptisms.

Throughout the same period we had 4 weddings, a renewal of wedding vows, 2 confirmations and 9 funeral services, divided between the two churches. In addition the priest attended and led funeral services at venues, such as local crematoria, outside of the Parish and was present at the interment of ashes in St. Mary’s churchyard and Garden of Remembrance.

A team of Lay Assistants participates in the services: reading from scripture, leading Intercessions, serving at the altar and as Lay Chalice assistants.

The average attendance at 9am is 30 adults and at 10.30 is 35 adults and 6 children.

Weekday Worship:

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<th>Day</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9.00 am</td>
<td>Morning Prayer</td>
<td>St. Michael’s</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>Eucharist</td>
<td>St. Mary’s</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
<td>9.00 am</td>
<td>Morning Prayer</td>
<td>St. Michael’s</td>
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“A feeling of belonging – with a caring and supportive congregation”

Parishioner 2018
**Messy Church:** is held on the first Saturday of each month, throughout the year with meetings scheduled to last for two hours.

- **Saturday** 3.30pm, Parish Hall
  - Activities, Worship
  - Followed by a meal

Messy Church is led by a qualified RE teacher and our Reader with a dedicated team of volunteers from the Parish.
Average regular attendees: 15 per month.

**Messy Vintage:** the principals of Messy Church have been adapted and are taken out to the residents of St. Catherine’s Nursing Home every two months.

- **Tuesdays** 11.00-13.00 St. Catherine’s Nursing Home
  - Activities, Worship with refreshments

Messy Vintage is led by our Reader and a dedicated team from the Parish.
Average regular attendees: 12 per session.

**The Sick:** The priest and Reader visit the sick and infirm at home in the nursing home or local hospice and administer the Sacrament. Holy oils and Blessed Sacrament is Reserved in both of the churches. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available on request from the priest before major solemnities.

**St. Francis College:** The retired Rector of the Parish was Chaplain of St. Francis College. The School was founded as a Roman Catholic Boarding School for Girls run by nuns. In recent years the school has dropped its religious affiliation and become independent.

A said Eucharist was held in term-time, each Thursday, at 12 noon until the Rector’s health failed; in recent years no pupils attended these services but the Rector was assisted by two or more parishioners.

The Rector attended special events at the beginning and end of each school term.

**Civic Role:** Following the Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial, in the Town Centre, representatives from local branches of the Armed Forces, Cadets, and British Legion and from the County and Municipal Authority and Legislative bodies, process to the Parish Church for the Service of Remembrance.
Communication

The best and most informative way for us to communicate is simply by being together at our Services and over coffee in the Church Hall.

Notices are given out at both churches during Sunday Worship and each congregant takes away a weekly Pew Sheet that includes information about Services for the coming week, the names of the sick or recently departed to be remembered in our prayers, and information about forthcoming events. The Pew Sheet is also available on the Parish Website.

The website letchworthparish.org provides a solid basis on which we can build and be more informative to a wider community.

Currently, it provides good information about the location of our churches and an outline history of each building; contact detail options and a diary giving full details of Services throughout the year.

There are some areas that need fleshing-out: the ‘Events’ diary is presently empty and needs updating. We intend to add a further diary to enable people to see at a glance when the Parish Hall is available for hire. There is also a good opportunity to provide information about groups that have regular bookings in the hall, for example our Messy Church worship.

The outgoing Rector is knowledgeable about IT hardware and software and has been largely responsible for writing and maintaining the website. Consequently, we need to consider how we will manage this task and take it forward.

Finance

The details of income and expenditure, given below, are for the year ending 31st December 2017 and were compiled by our Treasurer and Planned Giving Officer.

Our total income was £68,634 against an expenditure of £78,360 that on the face of it shows a deficit of £9,726. This is accounted for by £18,241 that was spent on a waterproof coating, for the roof of St. Michael’s. This money was partly ‘loaned’ from a small reserve-fund that has since been repaid in full through fundraising by the congregation and through targeted donations.

Overall, for Planned Giving, the amount received was £13,707. Of the 80 members on the Electoral Roll, 43 participated in Planned Giving (54%), contributing, on average, £319 per head during the year.

In respect of other income received, it is worth noting:

- Income from the Parish Hall was £16,616 against an expenditure for the hall of £15,172; thus creating a small profit of £1,444.
- The income from the car park is a very healthy £12,260; this sum includes season tickets that are valued by staff working in nearby
offices. The income from the car park is presently the Parish’s greatest source of income.

- Income from fundraising, for specific projects, was £6,357 with an additional one-off grant of £3,500 towards the waterproof membrane for St. Michael’s.

We have genuinely struggled to pay the full complement of our Parish Share; the deficit arose in 2010 when the sum owed was £42,171 and the Parish could pay only £29,542 towards this. This was largely the result of our losing the regular income from a toddler group that moved to larger premises as a result of its growing success. Since then, the deficit has accrued each year and we now face arrears of £161,244. The Parish Share paid in 2017 was £24,000 against an allocation of £46,778.

We are only too aware of our financial poverty, our debt and indebtedness to the Diocese. But we are confident that we manage what money there is, both incoming and outgoing, scrupulously. Our accounts have been consistently praised for the rigorous and meticulous bookkeeping through recent difficult times.

Similarly, all other documentation, licenses, certificates, insurances, etc. are up to date and standard and we can say, with confidence, that we ‘sail through’ the Archdeacon’s Inspection each year on time and well ordered.

As a congregation there is hope, desire and genuine belief that things can be turned round by a very committed group of people working under the dynamic and inspirational leadership of their new priest.

In **Conclusion**, we see this juncture, in our Parish life, as an opportunity to build on what we have and to make significant changes that will foster an environment to help us develop and grow. As a congregation, we are united in love and friendship with one another and with God.

We now seek and desire to refresh our purpose. There is a need and a longing to be united in this purpose, to give us the strength and opportunity to grow, reach out, listen and to act to make our presence meaningful within our local community.

Would you consider helping us and guiding us into our future?

“We should look to be a thriving part of Letchworth where people come to enjoy the love of God and fellowship of others”

*Parishioner 2018*