

Parish of  
Harpenden

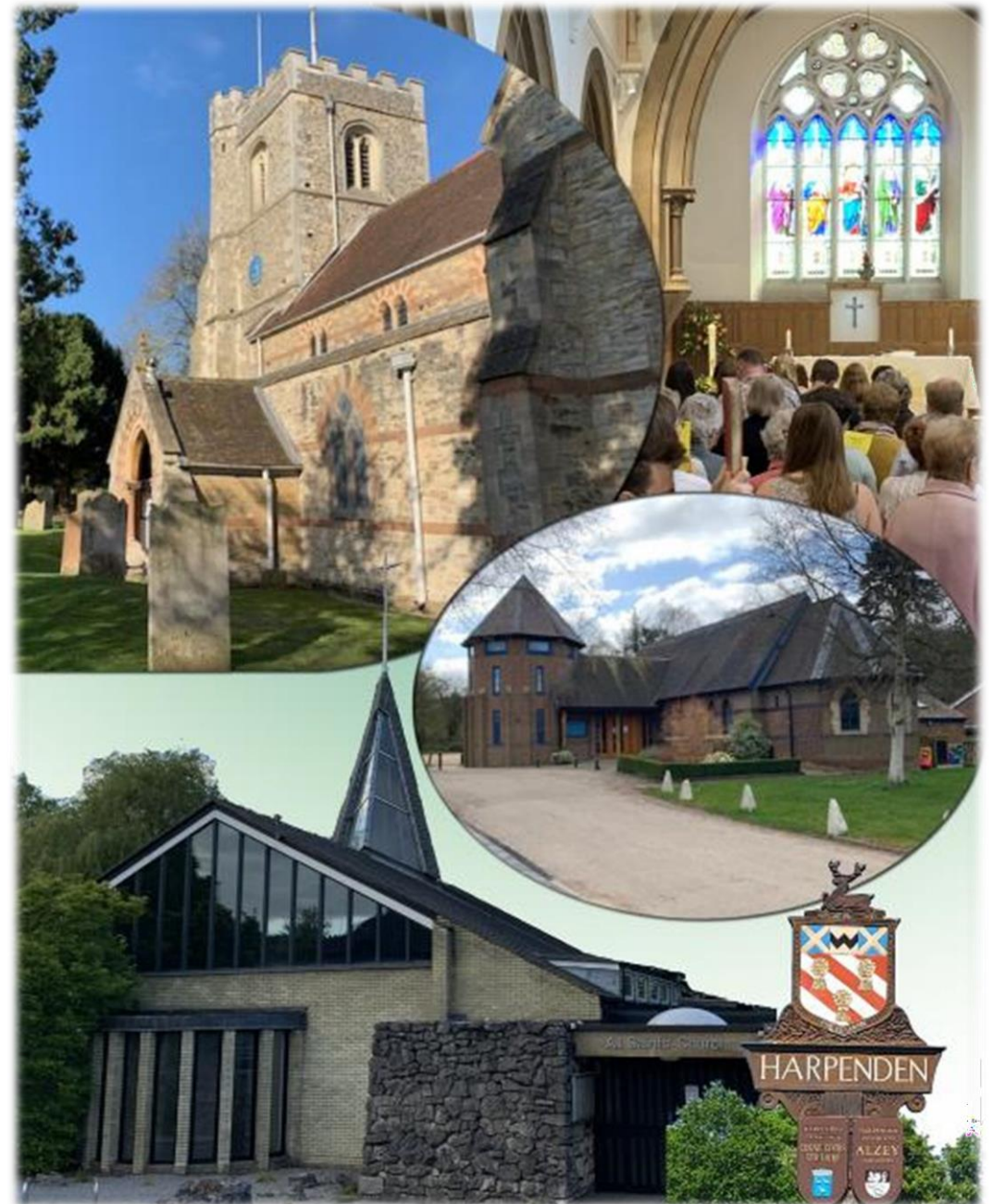


## CONNECT, BELONG, SHARE, GROW

Our mission is to build connections, encourage belonging,  
and share an appealing faith that grows a vibrant Christian community  
at every stage of life

## Parish Profile

August 2024





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Harpenden is an attractive town, with a population of just over 30,000, located in Hertfordshire, halfway between St Albans and Luton.

The Parish comprises three churches which offer a wide range of worship opportunities and styles within the broad, mainstream Anglican tradition. Each church has its own identity and leadership team giving parishioners the benefits of being part of the wider family whilst maintaining the fellowship, distinctiveness and individuality of each congregation.

St Nicholas' Church is situated in the centre of the town, next to the High Street and has been a site of Christian worship for over 800 years. Adjacent to the Church, is St Nicholas' (CofE aided) Primary School, with which there is a special relationship. St Mary's Church, located at the northern end of the town, is physically the smallest of the three churches and All Saints', toward the east of the Parish, is the most modern building completed in 1965.

Music plays an important role in the life of the Parish with a diversity of styles and traditions reflecting the form of worship at each service, ranging from Cathedral style repertoire and traditional hymns to contemporary songs and Taizé chanting. St Nicholas' Church choir aspires to be one of the leading parish church choirs in the country.

We are proud of our role as a training Parish, having welcomed a series of curates as Deacons, helping them to ordination as priests and watching with pride as they have moved to their own parishes. The Parish has a house for a curate.

The Parish of Harpenden is pleased to welcome the Prayers of Love and Faith for same-sex couples. All the clergy in our parish are happy to provide such prayers within a service upon request. The PCC has unanimously endorsed this decision of the clergy and the use of the newly commended Prayers for Love and Faith. As a parish we are committed to being an inclusive church, called to be caring, loving and welcoming to all.





Our Parish is part of civic life in the town. St Nicholas' Church hosts the annual Town Council Civic Service and the Rector and choir play a formal role in the Town's Remembrance Day commemorations. We celebrated the Coronation and Jubilees with special services and community tea parties, and the Queen's death was marked in various ways across our three churches.

Congregations at the three churches have broadly recovered to close to pre-Covid levels, with an average attendance of 185, 38 and 43 across the Sunday morning services at St Nicholas', St Mary's and All Saints' respectively. Our electoral roll has remained relatively stable over the last decade and currently stands at 601 for the Parish. All three churches stream a selection of services allowing those who are unable to attend services to join worship from home.



## Our challenges

In relative terms, in many ways, we have a strong parish. In the coming years, we seek to develop our potential to do more in fulfilling our Mission, addressing issues such as:

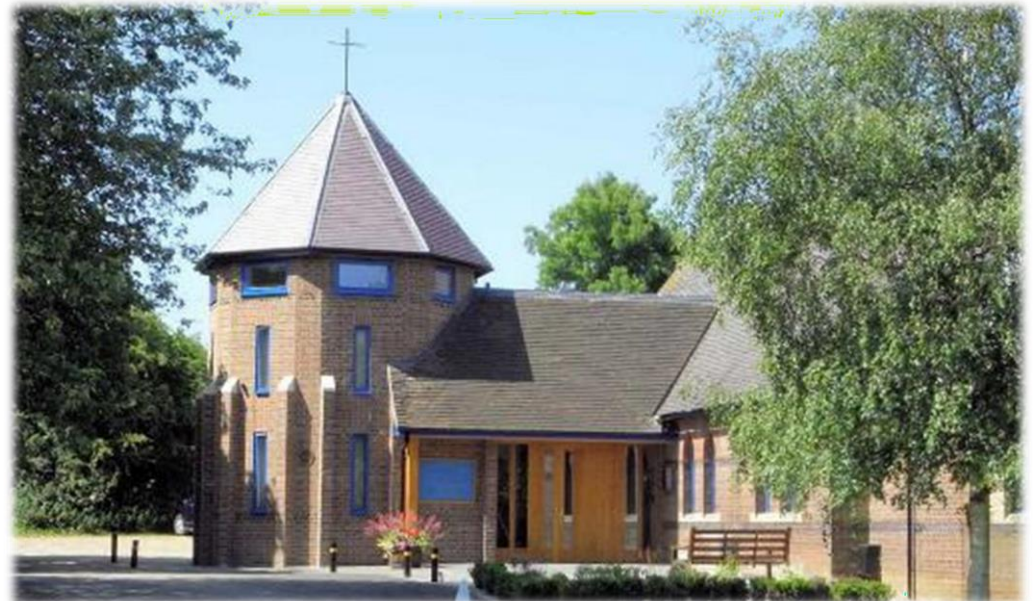
- How do we make our presence felt in Harpenden and in a fast-changing world, with the challenges of new social media and changing lifestyles?
- While we are strongly committed to maintaining the distinctive roles and identities of our three churches, we also seek to deepen the shared identity of the Parish.
- Securing our long-term financial future: while currently we are in budget balance, and we had a successful appeal recently, we must mobilise our resources as effectively as possible to better fulfil our Mission.

This is our current thinking about the future, but we are open to the Holy Spirit and someone who may lead us into new and exciting pathways.

## Our new Rector

While respecting our strengths, we seek someone who will help us to evolve and enable us to be more courageous. Our next Rector will:

- Be an open and inspiring leader, while being an effective manager and team-player;
- Have skills and experience of successful outreach activities, including in collaboration with others;
- Sustain and develop:
  - our mission to families, children, young people and schools;
  - our provision for older people
  - the diversity of worship styles within our churches;
  - the value of our strong music tradition;
  - the nurturing of a shared Parish identity, including building connections between the different congregations across our three churches;
  - the encouragement of new volunteers and greater engagement across our congregations;
  - and create a welcoming and inclusive approach to all.



## The Parish: Governance

Our ethos of three churches in one Parish is reflected in the governance of the Parish, as well as the distinctive styles of worship across the churches.

At a Parish level, there is a Parochial Church Council (PCC), two Parish wardens and other PCC officers. For each church there is a District Church Council (DCC) and district wardens. The DCCs report to the PCC. There are annual reports for the Parish and each of the three churches.

The PCC works with the Rector and the associate vicars to promote the vision of the Church. PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the Parish. PCC membership consists of the Rector, the Associate Vicars, the two Parish wardens, a member elected to General and Diocesan Synod together with members elected to PCC and Deanery Synod by those on the Parish's electoral roll. The Parish Treasurer is currently an elected member of the PCC. The Parish Safeguarding Officer is a co-opted member. Members of the PCC are required to complete safeguarding training and new members complete a trustee registration form and are provided with the booklet "Trusteeship – An Introduction for PCC Members". The PCC appoints a Secretary and a Minutes Secretary, who attend PCC meetings as observers.

The full PCC meets six times during the year. Given its wide responsibilities, the PCC has a number of committees - each dealing with a particular aspect of Parish life. The Finance Committee oversees the management of the PCC budgets; the Giving Committee oversees fund raising; and the Pay Committee oversees the pay and remuneration of the PCC's employees (two office staff, with delegated powers to set salaries). The Parish Treasurer provides regular financial reports. A Standing Committee oversees the agenda and arrangements for the PCC meetings.

The PCC is responsible for the maintenance of all the district churches and halls. It is also responsible for the maintenance of three clergy houses and rental property on Church Green. The Parish has also contributed to the maintenance of the Rectory.

The running of the Parish is well supported by the Parish Office, comprised of two staff, which offers efficient support and a welcoming face to visitors.



## Worship life

While based at, and having primary responsibility for, St Nicholas', the Rector will have oversight of the three churches and leadership of the Parish as a whole.

We are blessed with three churches that provide variety and the ability to express Anglicanism in different ways. We are proud of this diversity of worship options, and we believe that this is a key reason people choose to worship in our churches. A full list of our services is given in the Appendix.

Each of our churches has a Mission Action Plan seeking to reflect the diversity of our churches, our congregations and our community.

### *St Nicholas'*

St. Nicholas' is large in physical size, diverse in worship styles, and both large and diverse in its congregation. The styles of worship include said Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Morning Praise, Simply Worship and Choral Evensong.

Sunday services are generally well attended at St Nicholas' Church. At 8am there is a said BCP Holy Communion, with an average attendance of around 20. Sung Eucharist is at 9.30am (average congregation 115) with Morning Praise at 11.30am (43). Choral Evensong is at 6.30pm (52). Our bell ringers call the town to worship ahead of the 9.30am service and on special occasions.

There are teams of readers, intercession leaders, sides people and altar servers for the 9.30am service. A Sunday Club is run in the hall, although this is smaller than was historically the case. Further innovations are planned from September 2024 – to better teach and nurture children and young people in the once-a-month service. At Mothering Sunday and Harvest there is to be an 'All-age' service led by the Scouts/Cubs/Beavers and St Nicholas' School respectively.

The 11.30 Morning Praise service is led by a lay steering team, with themed programmes and a variety of speakers. The service includes Holy Communion once a month. Additionally, they hold occasional special services including dramas, Songs of Praise, prayer stations, Café Church and an annual pet service.



Simply Worship is held at 4.30pm on the first Sunday of the month and has an average attendance of 105. It is aimed at whole families, so parents and children can come and worship together in an accessible and relaxed service. The services have a theme and a linked child-friendly activity. A committee of parents help the clergy to decide the themes, greet families, organise children to give readings and prayers, and arrange refreshments and crafts.

A distinctive feature of our church is the music at our Sunday worship. We are fortunate to have a talented and enthusiastic Director of Music, excellent organists and a large choir with an extensive cathedral-style repertoire to support Sung Eucharist, Choral Evensong and many other services in the church calendar. Totalling over 60 singers, the full choir comprises a boys choir, a girls choir and an adult choir. In addition to their worship contribution, the choir is a major outreach tool for the Parish. Choir members of all ages are encouraged and supported to work towards the Royal School of Church Music Voice for Life scheme awards. During 2023 the choir sang at St Albans, St Edmundsbury and Rochester Cathedrals.

The music at Morning Praise includes organ-led hymns and more contemporary songs led by the Morning Praise music group, encouraging the congregation to join in with actions and percussion instruments.

To extend our welcome to those unable to attend services in person, Sung Eucharist and Choral Evensong are streamed on the church's Facebook page using a three-camera video system. Captions enable viewers to participate in the service. The system may also be used for weddings and funerals.

In addition to the Rector, services are led by the curate, Rev'd Cath Rindl, six readers, and lay leaders. Rev'd Mark Rodel joined the ministry team for the Parish as an Associate Minister in August 2024. He has been appointed Deputy Director of Mission for the Diocese of St Albans.

Said services of Holy Communion are held on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, Evening Prayer on Wednesday and Morning Prayer on Thursday.



Examples of services at St Nicholas' can be found using the links below:

- [Easter Sunday](#)
- [Good Friday](#)
- [Sunday Sung Eucharist](#)
- [Choral Evensong](#)
- [Service of Nine Lessons and Carols](#)
- [Advent Carol Service](#)
- [Special Evensong on the event of the death of HM The Queen](#)

### St Mary's

Whilst small in physical terms, St Mary's Church supports a vibrant community. At its heart, there is a distinctive ethos of caring and sharing responsibility both for people and the building.

Serving the northern side of the Parish, St Mary's works hard to justify its reputation as a friendly and welcoming church which values its sacramental tradition within an easy relaxed style of worship, whilst embracing alternative forms of worship.

On the first Sunday of the month there is a Service of the Word at 9.30am followed by a said Communion service at 11am. On the other Sundays there is a Common Worship Eucharist at 9.30 am.

Every third Sunday there is a 'Simply Worship' service at 4.30pm. This is a popular informal service led via PowerPoint, aimed at families and includes craft activities, songs and Bible teaching. The average attendance is 50.

On the first Wednesday of the month, St Mary's offers Holy Communion by extension service at Homedell House (local warden-controlled flats) and each Christmas, Easter and Harvest we lead a Songs of Praise service here.

On the first and third Tuesday of the month, St Mary's hosts a mid-week BCP Eucharist at 10am.

As well as our Associate Vicar, Sally Goodson, the Rev'd Professor Nicolas Goulding is one of the Associate Clergy. We also have 2 Readers (one of whom was recently commissioned as an Anna Chaplain) and one Lay Leader of Worship.



An example of a service at St Mary's can be found [here](#).

### *All Saints'*

The worship life of All Saints' is as wonderfully varied as the congregation itself.

There is one main 10am Sunday service which is on a regular monthly pattern of Service of the Word, Holy Communion, All Age Worship, Holy Communion.

Songs and liturgy are displayed on a projector screen. Music is typically led on the piano, with contributions on the organ and guitar, covering the musical styles from traditional hymns to Taizé chants and more modern songs.

There is a 'Local Ministry Development Team' who support Rev'd James Brown in leading worship and preaching, including a Reader. We are also blessed with the support of a retired priest with permission to officiate.

There are mid-week said Communion services on the first and third Thursday of each month and a variety of services held at both a residential home, and an assisted-living complex.

Beyond the regular services there are other more occasional worshipping events. In each of the four seasons, we hold a series of prayer walks through Batford Springs Nature Reserve, adjacent to the church. These have proved popular with people on the fringes of church life, as well as the core congregation. We hear readings, prayers and poems as we walk through the reserve, ending each evening at a local pub.

The liturgical seasons have often been marked with appropriately themed series of silent meditations. The seasons also offer opportunities for creative outreach, which over recent years has included firepit carols, videos on social media and beer and carols.



## Our Church Community

The Parish has a range of well-established, regular activities catering for a variety of age groups and needs. These are led by large numbers of volunteers: while it is difficult to give a total number, one indicator is that about 120 individuals have recently been engaged in safeguarding training by virtue of the roles they undertake.

Nevertheless, we face two challenges: the number of volunteers has steadily reduced over the years; and there is some imbalance between our current provision for older people and the very young, on the one hand, and older children and teenagers, on the other. The PCC reviewed and approved an internal Report on Children, Family and Youth mission in the Parish in early 2024 and the PCC is seeking to take this forward.

In addition to the services there are a wide range of groups and social activities on offer, including:

- A number of seasonal and year-round house groups, including Bible study, Alpha, home study, Lent and Advent and prayer groups;
- Courses in preparation for baptism and for confirmation are regularly organised. Baptism services are held monthly at St Nicholas' and on a more ad hoc basis at St Mary's and All Saints'. Eight children were prepared and admitted to Communion during the autumn of 2023. Four adults and six children were prepared for and confirmed in June 2024.
- For children and young people, we offer Sunday Clubs (All Saints' and St Nicholas'), toddler groups (Toddler Time at St Nicholas'; Busy Bunnies at All Saints') and a Parish Youth Group (SAS);
- Pastoral and bereavement care is provided across the Parish. There are three services of thanksgiving and remembrance each year;
- Cornelia's Coffee Shop at St Nicholas' opens three mornings and one afternoon a week, providing an opportunity for all ages and the wider community to connect and support one another. The money raised supports a variety of good causes;
- The Parish has recently appointed an Anna Chaplain. Additionally for older people, we have 'A Little Lunch' at St Mary's, providing two-course lunches each month for the over 75s living alone; the Tuesday Afternoon Group (St Mary's) which meets monthly for tea and to listen to a guest speaker; the Parish 'Tea, Cake and Chat' group meets every two months at All Saints', all providing a further opportunity for fellowship.



- There is a Parish-wide Mothers' Union.
- There are a wide variety of community and church groups using our Church Hall facilities, across all three churches: including the St Nicholas' Primary School (for daily lunches); two local nursery schools, a number of Girl Guiding groups and a Scout Group; local dance schools and drama groups; and flower-arranging groups.
- St Nicholas' Christmas Fayre; St Mary's Summer Fete; and All Saints' Quiz Nights are popular in attracting substantial numbers.
- All three churches are part of the Rocha UK eco-church scheme, with St Mary's and All Saints' having achieved silver level and St Nicholas' bronze.

Admission to St George's School, Harpenden, prioritises the children of families who have regularly attended services in the two years prior to application. Families who attend one of our three churches can have their record of attendance ("passport") stamped to evidence their attendance and may then apply for a clergy reference at the time of applying to the school. Each year around 70-75 families apply for a clergy reference. We recognise that this system heightens the number of children in Years 4 and 5 attending some of our services.



## Our Church Outreach

The Parish has a good record of support and engagement with the wider community, though in fulfilling our mission we seek to do more – to be open to those in need, both near and far, alert to the risks of being too inward-looking.

Overall, the Parish donated just over £17,000 to a number of designated charities in the financial year 2023. This includes donations from Cornelia's coffee shop, fetes, quizzes, and the Coronation Tea Party, etc.

The Parish is a significant contributor to local foodbanks (we support King's Pantry in Harpenden and FEED in St. Albans) while St Nicholas' and Cornelia's have donation points to support Azalea, a local charity. We have supported British Humanitarian Aid, for many years, with collections normally twice a year, with funding and supplies, as well as The Children's Society and Christian Aid. In 2022-23, the Parish was active in providing help and support to Ukrainian refugees who had recently arrived in the town, with generous levels of funding being donated. We also work on occasions with 'Harpenden Churches Together'.

The Parish has good links with local schools. Some of our Ministry Team are governors at local primary schools. Our clergy are involved in lessons, lunch clubs, Church visits, the Christian Union, and support STEP, the 267 Project and the Haven across both secondary and primary schools in the Parish. St Nicholas' Primary School holds a weekly assembly in St Nicholas' church and other schools hold services in the church across the year.

For many years, the Harpenden Money Advice Centre (with volunteers from different churches across the town) and the Harpenden Child Contact Centre have been hosted by All Saints', and both serve important local needs.



## Finances

The Parish has always paid its annual Parish share in full. In recent years, this has become more challenging and like many other parishes we have used some of our reserves to cover our expenditure.

In anticipation of a shortfall for 2024, we ran a congregational appeal in Spring 2023 which was very successful, primarily because of increases in regular giving. As a result, in 2023 the Parish ran a surplus of £48,213. The Parish has a comfortable level of reserves (though some of these are set aside for particular purposes).

The Finance Committee, including district treasurers, the Parish Treasurer, the Parish Giving Adviser, and those undertaking other dedicated roles, meets regularly. Currently, the Parish Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee (a parish warden) are chartered accountants.

Particularly given volatility in energy prices and other cost pressures, there can be no complacency despite the current strength of the Parish's balance sheet.

Our 2023 accounts are on our website and can be found [here](#).



## About Harpenden

Harpenden is a vibrant and successful town, equidistant between St Albans and Luton, described in a June 2023 Daily Telegraph survey as “the most desirable town in the country” in which to live.

Built around a 238-acre common and the 50-acre Rothamsted Park, Harpenden is home to around 30,000 people. The fast, frequent rail service to London makes the town a popular choice for commuters into the capital where many of the population work.

The largest local employer is Rothamsted Research, founded almost 200 years ago, it is a world leading centre undertaking cutting-edge agricultural science and innovation to generate discoveries and knowledge to produce sufficient nutritious food whilst caring for the environment.

One of the most pleasing aspects of town-life is the wide variety of youth and sporting organisations. The town is blessed with a number of Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownie packs as well as other participatory clubs and groups, with very active sports groups such as Harpenden Colts (boys and girls football), the local rugby club, tennis clubs, and cricket clubs.

The Harpenden Carnival, the Highland Gathering, Classics on the Common, Art on the Common, the Christmas Lights, and the Farmers’ markets reflect a vibrant community life. The new ‘Eric Morecambe Arts Centre’ offers various types of performance.

Despite the town’s wealth, inevitably there are pockets of deprivation and relative poverty and loneliness. There are a number of food banks for those in need and the Harpenden Trust charity, which was founded in 1950, continues to help Harpenden people in need.

Harpenden has three Ofsted-rated ‘Outstanding’ secondary schools and a fourth which is rated ‘Good’. Primary schools are similarly highly rated.

In addition to the Parish of Harpenden churches, Harpenden supports an exceptionally large range of other churches. Despite their theological diversity most of the churches meet under the “Churches Together in Harpenden” umbrella and work effectively together. ‘Youth With a Mission’, a global movement of Christians from many cultures, age groups and Christian traditions, dedicated to serving Jesus throughout the world, is based in Harpenden.



## Vicarage and Expenses of Office

The Rectory is located at 9 Rothamsted Avenue, AL5 2DD. It is an attractive, Edwardian detached house. Built in 1910, it broadly comprises six bedrooms (one en-suite), a family bathroom, two attic storage rooms, a cellar, study, sitting room, dining room, lounge (snug), kitchen with breakfast area, utility room, and downstairs WC. There is a garage and off-street parking for three cars. The south-east facing garden is largely laid to lawn with shrub borders.

The Rectory is located in a highly regarded residential area of the town and is conveniently a three-minute walk from St Nicholas' Church and the High Street. There are excellent VA/state schools within walking distance of The Rectory. Similarly, Harpenden Railway Station is less than a ten-minute walk away. Rothamsted Park, with the Eric Morecambe Centre (arts centre and theatre), the Harpenden Leisure Centre (swimming pool and gym), a playground and playing fields are very close by. Harpenden Common, hosting various outdoor events and fairs, as well as the Harpenden Cricket Club, is at the end of the High Street.

The Parish covers various costs and relevant expenses are reimbursed in full.

The Rectory is owned by the Diocese, while the PCC has contributed towards the maintenance and decorating of the Rectory in the past, the PCC does not have an obligation to do so. Redecoration grants are available from the Diocese.



For further information, please contact the Parish wardens:

- Kevin Featherstone ([churchwarden1@parishofharpenden.org](mailto:churchwarden1@parishofharpenden.org))
- Tim Linacre ([churchwarden2@parishofharpenden.org](mailto:churchwarden2@parishofharpenden.org))

## Appendix: list of services held in the Parish

### St Nicholas' Church

#### Regular Sunday Services

8am	Holy Communion (said)
9.30am	Sung Eucharist (with Sunday Club during school terms) except 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday which is an All-Age Eucharist – no Sunday Club
11.30am	Morning Praise (with Toddler Corner available) - with Holy Communion on the last Sunday of month
4.30pm	Simply Worship - on 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in each month – except August
6.30pm	Choral Evensong – there is usually a Taizé service on the 5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month

#### Weekday Services

Wednesday	10.30am	Said Eucharist
	5pm	Evening Prayer
Thursday	9am	Morning Prayer
Saturday	10.30am	Said Eucharist - BCP on first Saturday in the month, with Common Worship used on other Saturdays

### St Mary's Church

#### Regular Sunday Services

9.30am	Family Worship – 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month
11.00am	Said Holy Communion – 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month
9.30am	Family Communion – all Sundays except the first one
4.30pm	Simply Worship – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month

### **Weekday Services**

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>9am</b>	<b>Morning Prayer</b>
	<b>10am</b>	<b>Holy Communion Service (BCP) – 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday</b>
	<b>5pm</b>	<b>Evening Prayer</b>

### **All Saints' Church**

#### **Regular Sunday Services**

<b>10am</b>	<b>Morning Worship – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month</b>
	<b>Holy Communion – 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month</b>
	<b>All-Age Worship – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month</b>

### **Weekday Services**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>9.15am</b>	<b>Morning Prayer</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>9am</b>	<b>Morning Prayer</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>10am</b>	<b>Holy Communion Service – 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday</b>