

Cambridge Judge Business School

REACH Ely Case Study Series

Reimagining Churches as Community Assets
for the Common Good

ST PETER DUXFORD



Text, design and photography

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**REACH Ely (Reimagining Churches as
Community Assets for the Common Good)**
is a multi-partner research project that
aims to help communities make fuller use
of their churches.

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The project is implemented by

**Centre for Social Innovation at
Cambridge Judge Business School
and the Diocese of Ely**

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and Historic England*

www.reachely.org

The challenges facing church communities and their buildings have been extensively studied in the light of declining church attendance in the United Kingdom over several decades. REACH Ely aims to address the less-well-understood opportunities for churches to engage and reconnect with the 97.7 per cent of the local communities in the Diocese of Ely who do not attend their parish churches.

With the absence of universal determinants of success and failure of churches in the community engagement context, the REACH Ely project will provide an understanding of the relationship between communities and wider use of church buildings as well as the contribution that churches make to the common good. The project will determine community values, needs and opportunities that can be used in the most effective way to ensure a win-win outcome for communities and sustainable future of church buildings.

The **case study series** is based on in-depth interviews and observations about church building use with informants from a subset of deaneries and parishes in the Diocese of Ely, supplemented with secondary information about the communities they represent. The purpose of the case study is to unearth various church experiences in renovating and envisioning their buildings as missional and social spaces, engaging with local and wider communities, addressing current challenges, and learning from their practice.

The **Glossary** is a separate document that accompanies the case study series. It is available as a download from the project's website www.reachely.org

On the cover: Mosaic details of the High Altar at St Peter's church.

On page 1: St Peter's church in winter (Photo credit: St Peter Duxford).

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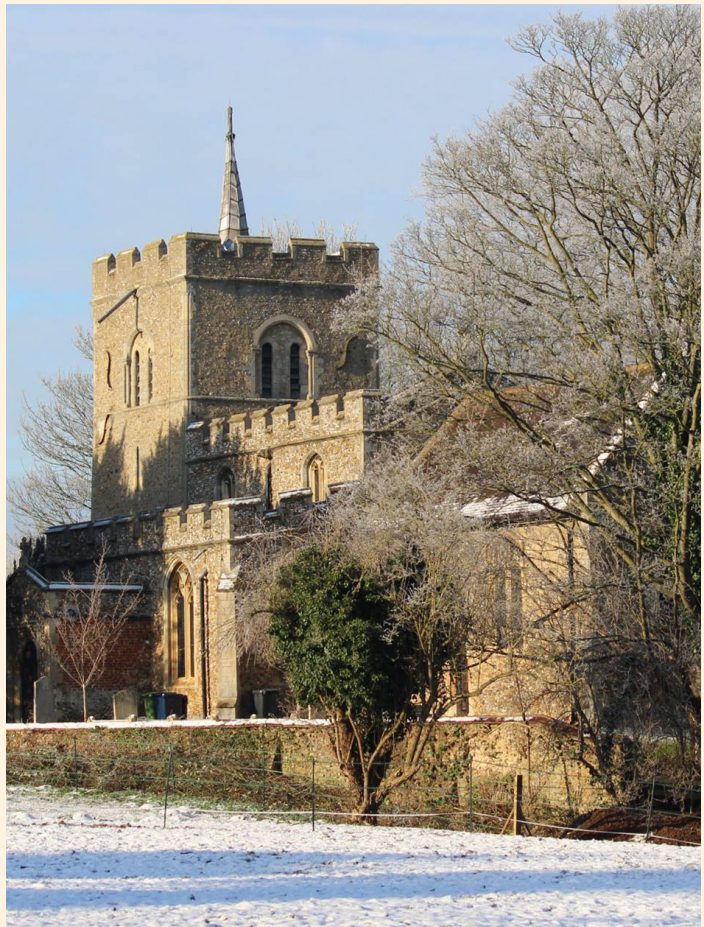
ST PETER DUXFORD

Church Category: Rural

Deanery: Granta

Address: Chapel St, Duxford,
Cambridge CB22 4RJ

Joint website of three parishes:
www.hinkledux.com



Summary

Buildings and Artefacts: Grade I listed church building; 12th-century tower, stone font, and some Norman windows; Kitchenette and WC facilities; Restored tower clock; Some Victorian pews removed; Marble monuments and plaques; Painted statues of saints

Congregation to Population Ratio: 32 / 1,927

Fundraising: Tower Clock Appeal; Roof and heating funds; Garden party; Afternoon tea; Auction of promises; Fundraising for school

Income Generation: Parish giving

Communications: Website; Facebook page; Nexdoor social network; Newsletter; Posters; School email system; Visitors' Book; Pew sheets; Book; Standing banner; Noticeboard

Community Engagement: Café Church; Coffee mornings; Craft Café; Lego Sunday; Messy Easter; Mossy Church; Toddler Group; School assemblies; Pop-up church.

ROOTS

Profile

Duxford is a large village in Cambridgeshire about seven miles south-east of Cambridge, below the point where the river Cam or Granta emerges from the uplands of north-west Essex. Duxford is part of the Hundred Parishes Society, an area of around 450 square miles richly endowed with many fine examples of agricultural and built heritage that has over 6,000 listed buildings. The large village of Whittlesford sits to the north of Duxford, and the smaller villages of Ickleton and Hinxton to the south and east, respectively.

According to the 2011 census, Duxford has a population of 1,836. However, this is likely to have grown significantly as a result of new housing built to the north of the A505. Duxford is close to a number of major road junctions, including Junction 10 of the M11 and the busy A505 and A11 junction. There is a railway station at nearby Whittlesford, serving Cambridge and London commuters.

The parish was formerly devoted mainly to arable farming but due to the excellent road network it is attracting a growing number of businesses, thanks to its proximity to the University of Cambridge, research centres in biotechnology such as the nearby Wellcome Genome Campus. One of its largest employers, Hexcel

Composites, has six manufacturing buildings and is also Hexcel's European Centre for Research and Technology.

The village has a Church of England primary school, two public houses, a post office and a recently opened café. A new Community Centre, with sporting and social facilities, opened in March 2020 on a sports field adjacent to the school. There is a scout hut on the fringes of the village. Duxford has its own football team.

The village has two Grade I listed medieval parish churches, St John's and St Peter's. The two parishes were combined in 1874 with services being held thereafter at St Peter's church. The church of St John (*see photo on page 3*) was declared redundant (although still consecrated), and is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust, and remains open as a venue for concerts and plays. A United Reformed Church closed in 2019.

Duxford is also home to the Imperial War Museum, Europe's largest air museum using the same hangars and buildings served by Royal Air Force. The museum is located on a former Royal Air Force airfield that was used as a sector station during the Second World War. The museum is housing over 180 historical aircraft and attracts thousands of visitors every year to its air shows and events.





Top: View of St Peter's church from south-west. Middle: Exterior of the north wall of church building; South entrance porch. Bottom: Church noticeboard by the road; St John's church in Duxford (in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust).

Building

St Peter's church is located in the south of the village and has been dedicated to Saint Peter since at least 1275. The church was built in the 12th century of flint and field stones with ashlar dressings and had a chancel, a nave with aisles and a clerestory, and a west tower – only the 12th-century tower and some windows remain from the Norman period. The nave was rebuilt in the 14-15th centuries. The tower has two round-arched belfry-windows in each face and opens to the nave by a wide low arch. In 1728, the existing tall spire was removed and replaced with the present shorter one. By the time the parishes were merged, the building was in a poor state, and had to be extensively repaired in the 1880s. The chancel is almost as large as the nave and was embellished with much tiling during the restoration in 1883. It retains one 12th-century window in the north wall. The churchyard, along with that of St John's, was closed in 1879 and a new cemetery north of St John's Road was given by the rector. In 1968–70, the tower was partitioned off as a vestry, and a new organ installed.

Since 1967, the church building has been Grade I listed. At present, St Peter's church is in need of some renovation. A new heating system is urgently needed to replace the existing Victorian system. Rugs have been scattered around the church to cover the grating and to introduce a more welcoming feel. The kitchen area and a WC facility are in need of updating and there is currently no disabled WC facility. A fundraising drive has been undertaken to repair the roof. Some of the pews have been removed, although this had caused a rift among the congregation.

The church is usually open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. although lead thefts from both aisles means that it is currently locked. The building can accommodate more than 100 people.

Artefacts

The remaining pews in the church date to the Victorian era. St Peter's has an early 18th-century pulpit, which has been restored and a barley twist balustered communion rail. The font consists of a 12th-century chamfered square bowl on solid clunch base with attached columns at each corner and with two crudely carved traceried panels. The chancel contains a black marble monument with a triangular plaque urn above the drapery to Bridget Wife of the Revd Christopher Hand (d.1798) and a classical pedimented design with inscription on black marble to Tho Harris (d.1738); there are a number of marble floor plaques. In the Lady Chapel the two modern, brightly painted saints, stand comfortably in their 15th-century niches supported by medieval angels. The church has a 19th-century tower clock, which was restored in 2018 with a new clock face, rebuilt mechanism, and an automatic time adjuster to keep it accurate.



Top: View towards the chancel from the nave. Middle: Mixed seating arrangement in the nave; Children's corner with tables in the south aisle. Bottom: Kitchenette and WC facilities under the tower.

RUNNING

Team

The parish of Duxford is part of a combined benefice with those of St Mary Magdalene church in Ickleton and St Mary and St John church in Hinxton (see *REACH Ely case study Hinxton*). The ministry team of St Peter Duxford includes a vicar, an associate priest responsible for three churches (Duxford, Ickleton, and Hinxton) and working closely with the priest at Whittlesford, for example, running a shared Lent group. Other team members include two lay readers and a churchwarden. The church has an active PCC of six members.

Religious Services

A quiet, reflective Holy Communion service with no singing is celebrated at Duxford on the first Sunday of the month at 8 a.m. The service follows the order in the Book of Common Prayer in traditional language. The second Sunday of the month sees an AI2gether service at 10 a.m. A communion service with activities for children takes place on fourth Sundays. On most fifth Sundays, all three churches come together for a joint service. Messy Church takes place every second Sunday, and a Taize service is held at Ickleton. The vicar leads regular assemblies at the village primary school and the school carol service is held at St Peter's church. Once or twice a term Café Church is organised (see *Community*).

The congregation at St Peter's is quite elderly and numbers attending had decreased over time. The team is working to develop more family-friendly services and this has attracted a number of new families. Attendance numbers are in the early twenties although active members have been as low as eight.

Covid-19 lockdown. During the pandemic crisis in 2020, the church building of St Peter's was temporary locked and weddings and christenings postponed, in line with the Church of England's requirements for all church buildings. The church was keeping in touch with people by **livestreaming** Sunday services via **Zoom**. Priest's reflections, service sheets and hymns as well as contact phones of the priest and churchwardens were shared on the **website**.

Fundraising

Tower Clock Appeal. During the summer of 2017, St Peter's church launched an appeal to bring Duxford's tower clock back to its former working condition. Aiming to raise £8,000, the church achieved in total of over £11,000 raised by the village. In addition, £1,000 grant was received from South Cambridgeshire Council and, in May 2018 a 'sharing heritage' grant of £6,500 from given by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The renovated tower clock was installed in November 2018. The progress of work was shared on a dedicated website (duxfordclock.org).

Roof and heating funds. Specific fundraising events such as Retro at the Rectory & The Great Duxford Bake-off had been held to raise money for essential repairs to the roof and heating projects.

Garden party. This an annual event raises around £2,000 and is held in one of the large gardens in the village. Networking is important in making this event a success.

Afternoon tea. This popular event was held in the garden of the former vicar's house and had raised just over £1,000.

Auction of promises. This is a regular event that raises funds specifically for the church.

Fundraising for school. After a fire at Duxford Church of England primary school in July 2020, St Peter's church shared a call for crowdfunding on its website and a link to JustGiving.com to help replace books and classroom equipment. As of December, the original target to raise £8,000 has been exceeded as 520 people have donated in total £22,137.

Income Generation

Parish giving. Because of the small size of the congregation, parish giving had been insufficient to cover the parish share in recent years. As the congregation grows, they are being encouraged to donate on a regular basis.

The church does not have an efficient heating system and so had been unable to generate any **rental income**. There are other spaces for hire in the village and so demand may be low: the school hall can be hired for clubs and events and the new community centre will offer a range of facilities.

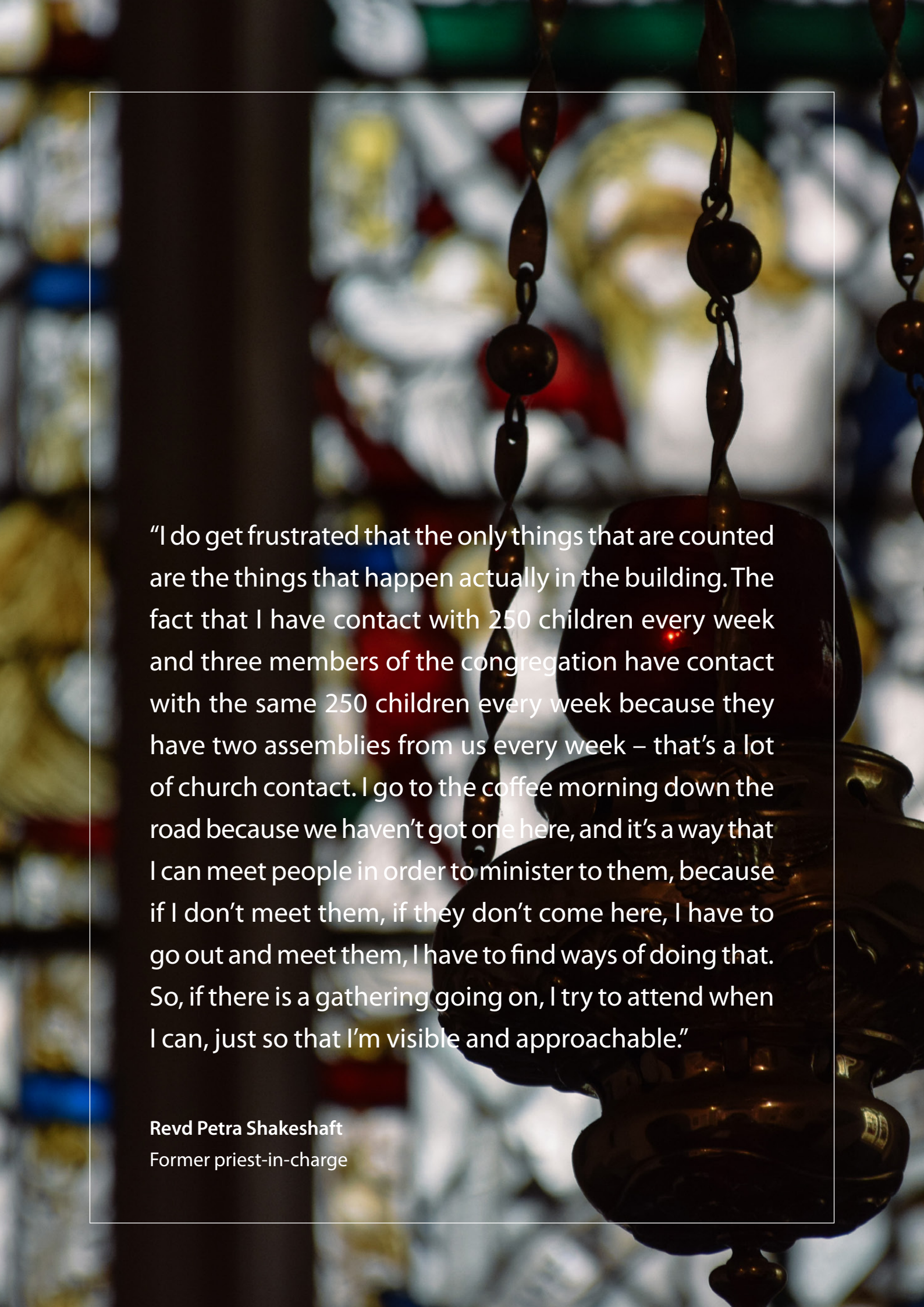
St Peter's does not have a Friends group but is looking to set one up in the future.

Communications

A range of communication materials are used by the church. The **website**, www.hinkledux.com, covers all three parishes and is still under construction. St Peter's has a **Facebook** page but it has not been updated for some time. **Nextdoor** is seen as a more active social networking service for neighbourhoods and communities in the village, especially for young families.

A **newsletter** is sent out at Easter and Christmas, and **posters** are placed around the village to advertise events and the vicar uses the **school's email system** to get the word out to families. Monthly **pew sheets** are published online and are available in the church. The **Visitors' Book** records visitors' comments and a **short book** on the history of Duxford and St Peter's church, written by a church member, is on sale in the church.

Roll-up standing **banners** on the history of the church and the restoration of the Duxford tower clock are placed in the church. Near the road, there is a church **noticeboard**.



“I do get frustrated that the only things that are counted are the things that happen actually in the building. The fact that I have contact with 250 children every week and three members of the congregation have contact with the same 250 children every week because they have two assemblies from us every week – that’s a lot of church contact. I go to the coffee morning down the road because we haven’t got one here, and it’s a way that I can meet people in order to minister to them, because if I don’t meet them, if they don’t come here, I have to go out and meet them, I have to find ways of doing that. So, if there is a gathering going on, I try to attend when I can, just so that I’m visible and approachable.”

Revd Petra Shakeshaft
Former priest-in-charge

REACH

Community

Café Church events happen once or twice a term, usually on a Sunday afternoon. These are relaxed occasions and are suitable for all ages. The congregation sit at tables rather than in rows and food and drink are available throughout. There is a short, informal service, time for discussion, chatting, singing and activities for all.

Coffee mornings help to alleviate loneliness, particularly for the elderly population, and also allow the vicar to take the ministry out to the villagers.

Craft Café is a social rather than a fundraising event and is held monthly at the church. Village residents can come along and join a group making and selling crafts and sharing the fellowship. The marketing of the event had dropped off for a while.



Events

Lego Sunday is a new event with places for 25 children and involves telling the Easter story through play.

Messy Easter. Craft activities are on offer on an Easter theme for 3-11 year olds.

Mossy Church. This outdoor version of Messy Church has been held in a small wood next to the church.

Toddler Group. This meets every Thursday morning and the vicar helps to organise this. It is volunteer-led and parents are reminded by email the night before. The numbers attending from the village have grown over the past year. Previously, families from Ickleton had attended in an attempt to create a critical mass for the group.

Page 10: Craft Café events. Top-right: Jane Wilson-Howarth gives a talk with photographs from her time in Nepal. Page 11, Row 1: St Peter's Quilting Bee has been making quilts for Wolfson Ward at the Rosie Hospital in Cambridge. Every baby that leaves the ward is presented with their own handmade quilt; Children's corner at St Peter's church. Row 2: Christingles event for children and families; Annual Toy Service (Photos by St Peter Duxford).



“I think by getting some of younger families in, who may or may not come to church... It’s all about relationships and the more they get to know me and the more they get to know the church community and realise that actually we’re not that strange they can be encouraged to come into some things.”

Revd Petra Shakeshaft

Former priest-in-charge

Engagement

School assemblies. The former vicar Petra Shakeshaft run monthly assemblies at the village primary school, which has in the region of 250 pupils.

Focus on families and younger people. The church had put considerable energy into attracting families to the church, whether to worship or to alleviate social isolation. Events such as Messy Church and Lego Easter are specifically targeted at attracting more children to church.

Integration into village activities. The church was aiming to host the coffee mornings previously held at the United Reformed Church before its closure in 2019. The former vicar of St Peter Duxford Petra Shakeshaft attended these to reach out to the community and to make herself more approachable.

Pop-up church. This event used to be organised at the former vicar’s home in the winter months, principally because the church was too cold to use. Her husband, who is an art historian, had also given talks at their home.



Clockwise from top-left: South porch entrance to St Peter's church; Painted statues of saints; Stained glass depicting St John and St Peter; Handmade crafts on sale in the church (Photo by St Peter Duxford); Visitors' Book, books and postcards in the church; Remaining pews with kneelers.

REFLECTIONS

Challenges

Income generation

The small size of the congregation means that it is difficult to raise the funds needed to maintain the ministry. There is currently no Friends group at the church to raise the funds needed for refurbishment.

Asset management

The roof is in need of urgent repair and an appeal was launched for this. The lack of an efficient heating system is an issue for the winter months. Better facilities are needed – a disabled WC facility and an updated kitchen – to allow for full use of the church building.

Youth engagement

The former vicar engaged with the children through school assemblies and through events organised for them at the church but this will be an ongoing challenge for a new vicar.

Reconnection with the parish community

There had been strong feelings over the removal of some of the pews by a previous incumbent and the congregation had been split over the issue. Some members of the congregation had subsequently left the church. In addition, there is a new housing development of 500 houses to the north of the A505 road which is difficult to reach. It is currently distanced both physically and spiritually from St Peter's church as there is no gathering place in which to hold a service.

Small and senior congregation

The numbers attending services is low and typically of an older age range, although numbers of families attending has started to grow. It is a struggle to attract new people to attend the traditional services.

Income generation

There are sufficient rooms for hire in the village and the church is currently unattractive to hirers because of the lack of heating. A challenge for a new vicar is to focus efforts on encouraging regular giving to maintain the ministry.

Lack of personnel and volunteers

There is only a small core of volunteers and the former vicar was fully stretched with the management of three churches, church administration and the introduction of new initiatives, such as the Toddler Group. The need to rebuild the congregation at St Peter's – the largest of the three churches but with the smallest congregation – is one of the biggest challenges. The lack of a Friends group means that the burden of applying for grants and funds falls on the vicar.



View of the nave with red carpet from the chancel and the High Altar marble mosaic.
On Page 16: Rugs, red carpet and roll-up information banner in the nave.



St Peter's at the heart of Duxford

Our history is rich, seen by
beliefs and values, made clear
in the walls of our village
church.

This church has been a witness
of the great and the small,
witnesses to the fact that St Peter's
has been here for almost 1000
years.

In our day, the church has
undergone changes, in its
background and surroundings.
But the heart has not changed.
To rebuild, to repair, to
improve, to grow, to
bring people together and
build communities is our
mission.

We welcome you to our
church for all occasions,
or simply to share the
peace and joy of the
Lord's Supper.

Lessons Learned

To work in partnership

To avoid duplication of effort, the former vicar had worked with the priest at nearby Whittlesford church to run a joint Lent group and to create service sheets.

To create a living church

The previous incumbent expressed concerns that it would be difficult to grow attendance at traditional services and therefore the church needs to introduce initiatives that reach out and offer hospitality to the community, for example at the café church.

To take the church into the community

Members of the congregation keep in touch on a weekly basis with schoolchildren in the community. In addition, the former vicar participates in informal coffee mornings and attends village meetings setting a good example of socialisation and networking with community leaders and members, thus representing the church in the community and being available.

To increase opportunities for further church and community integration

The church is planning to introduce a Friends group in the future. There is goodwill towards the church in the village and it is well supported at various events, for example, at the auction of promises fundraiser. A new vicar will need to focus on building relationships in the community and reach out to people who may have previously attended church but left after disagreements over the partial removal of pews.

To adapt the church building for more flexible and a wider use

There is potential to implement plans to turn the church into a hub for the community given its visible location in the village. The improvement of facilities in the church building including the heating, the space in the church can be flexible enough to provide art sessions and other family-oriented activities.



“I want [the church] to be a hub of the community again which it would’ve been in medieval times [when] they would’ve had markets and all sorts of things in here. We have to go back to basics; it will still be a sacred space, we’ll still have that, but we can use this as the village space.”

Revd Petra Shakeshaft
Former priest-in-charge

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