

Peninsula Post 5

An occasional magazine from the
Church of England Parish of Harwich
November 2025/January 2026

Home-Start

Who remembers Mrs Thatcher, a few Conservative MPs and some daily newspapers getting very annoyed at the Church of England and calling it Marxist? It was caused by the publication of a big book called 'Faith in the City'. It was a carefully researched report with a host of recommendations. From it, parish churches felt a new need to get involved with their communities, especially in deprived areas. In Harwich it resulted in the creation of Home-Start which will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2026. Based for many years in St Nicholas Hall in Bathside it is set in the second most deprived community in Essex after Jaywick and has sought to give families real and consistent support.

As you can imagine it has taken huge efforts to keep securing the funding, serving the people and recruiting and training the volunteers. It also has paid staff with a board of trustees and among the trustees have been those from our churches and others in the town.

Immaculately clean, St Nicholas Hall is small but keeps making a difference to the area. They were asked how we might make the link between church and Home-Start lively and ongoing; they answered by people training as volunteers, being trustees and making a financial contribution.

At present they are able to pay a substantial rent for the building which covers the insurance, cleaning, gas, electricity and water costs. But to what extent are they on our minds and in our prayers?

Some facts: Home-Start support about 450 Harwich families a year ...

- Their vision is: to see a society in which every parent has the support they need to give their children the best possible start in life
- On Monday morning there is a Baby-Start group
- Wild Wednesdays is a 10-week course helping parents and children embrace the outdoor environment
- Run locally it has the support of the national Home-Start UK organisation
- MAZE is the 12-week programme to support families with a child who has Special Educational Needs
- Funding is an ongoing issue but so many people and groups support them – over 60 are listed on their acknowledgments list including 4 supermarkets
- 1 in 9 of the volunteers received support from Home-Start
- 3 in 4 volunteers say it improves their mental health
- There is a full summer programme
- Fun-Start is open to all families with a child under 5 on Thursday mornings getting the child 'school ready'
- Parkeston Stay and Play is run on Wednesdays at Parkeston Railway Club and is free, run by Home Start
- Home visiting is at the heart of their work, helping those facing disability, isolation, bereavement and other challenges
- 1 year's expenditure is about £300,000

Having reviewed the figures, and after meeting with the Chair and Treasurer of Home-Start, we're happy that the rent they pay covers costs, and that they are happy for inflation increases in rent annually to continue meeting costs. Given the historic ties between the church and Home-Start, with St Nicholas' Church being instrumental in its founding, and the great work they do in one of the most deprived wards in the county, we're not seeking to make a profit from their use of the hall.

I wonder if any of our groups have had a recent speaker from Home-Start or would like one and explore ways to link our churches back with something that started with the Harwich churches and one of who's first workers was Laura Garnham.

A question of money

These questions have been asked by people in the light of the information we now have about the Parish Giving Scheme for all new regular bank giving. Our Parish Treasurer Chris Wallace and the Team Rector answer these and are happy to answer other questions as they come in:

Q1. If I put money on the plate when it goes round at a service will it go to 'my church' or to the parish now?

A1. It is hoped after 21 years of being a single parish the expression 'my church' might have gone now. Loyalty to a building or congregation is not necessarily a bad thing but our attitude should be more mutual and united. That said, for now plate collections are still being banked by each church individually. Once we move to a parish system, we'll still be able to track which money came from which church, and it can be allocated to budgets accordingly. Long term though we should start thinking in terms of being a parish, rather than three individual churches, and how we make best use of resources together to further the work of the church in the Harwich Peninsula. There are efficiencies that can be made through working as a larger unit which would help improve the financial health of the parish.

Q2. Will my existing Direct Debits still go to 'my church' or will I see they go to the parish?

A2. As we move to a parish system, all Standing Orders will need to be redirected to the parish account. Whilst we want to centralise finances, it is possible to include the church name in the Standing Order reference if you want to give specifically to one church's budget.

Q3. Can we get the card readers that we see in other churches? - I have applied to the diocese for loan use of them but no reply. The machines we have at AS and SN are no good and operate like the ones in shops which need someone to help use them.

A3. That is certainly something we've looked into as we rethink the finances of the parish more widely, and how we encourage good stewardship and generosity. We hope the Diocese of Chelmsford will help us by the loan of machines to try out.

Q4. Will the QR codes in St Nicholas and All Saints still pay into those churches or into the parish?

A4. Each church has their own QR code through the Parish Giving Scheme, which can replace the old codes. Any donations can then be tracked to see where they came from.

HOW MUCH!?

In 2026 we know what it will cost to staff the parish and the deanery. We have two paid priests and the deanery overall has 5 allocated (we are currently trying to recruit, the other 3 priests cover 12 churches). The total bill for the deanery of Harwich is £550,140 and we are asked as a deanery to give £274,848. This means that the diocese subsidises the deanery by £275,292.

The Harwich Peninsula (St Nicholas, St Michael and All Saints) is asked to contribute £58,939, when the total cost of having Kirsty and Ian in post is £202,229, a subsidy of £143,290.

If you would like to discuss any financial issue relating to the churches please do make contact with our Parish Treasurer, Chris Wallace.

Mustard Seed Team

The following poem was inspired by a reflection on Living Waters given by Canon Caroline Harding, Warden of Readers and Lay Ministry Adviser for the Chelmsford Diocese, at a recent Mustard Seed Team retreat.

The Mustard Seed Team is a team within the Diocese of Chelmsford that provides support, resources, and training for those involved in children, youth, and family ministry in the Chelmsford area.

They offer advice, run events, and provide training for both paid and voluntary workers, including resources and a newsletter for those working with children and families.

They also offer a Children and Family worker's retreat day three times a year in various locations around the Diocese.

Living Waters by Liz McLeod

Living waters feed me
they fill up my reserves,
when I am low or empty
I am gifted more than I deserve.

When life opens a hole for the water to run out
and I can't plug it on my own,
I seek Christ's help to fill that gap
so I'm not working all alone.

And every time I seek His help
no matter how far away he may seem to be,
His love pours over me like a waterfall
a never-ending stream of life for me

Five Marks of Mission

In 1984 the Anglican Consultative Council (www.anglicancommunion.org) began to develop a "mission statement" for the worldwide Anglican Communion and the bishops of the Lambeth Conference adopted these "Five Marks Of Mission" in 1988. They were then adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in 1996. In 2012, the fourth mark was revised to reflect the need for the Church to challenge violence and work for peace. These five marks have been widely adopted by dioceses across the whole Anglican Communion as a working definition of mission to help churches consider their own mission priorities. They can help us to reflect on our own mission, challenging and encouraging us and helping us to consider whether there are areas of mission we have yet to fully engage with.

Mark 1 – Tell

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

Mark 2 – Teach

To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

Mark 3 – Tend

To respond to human need by loving service

Mark 4 – Transform

To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

Mark 5 – Treasure

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Thinking about the above you might like to start saying this prayer:

*Jesus, living Word of God,
Your Nazareth promise of good news is timeless,
Still you offer it to renew our world today:
You offer release for those imprisoned by debt and poverty,
Life for those who know only death and despair.
Provoke us by your Spirit, so we no longer linger and delay,
Quicken us with the vision of a world transformed,
Challenge us to make hope real for all,
So that God's kingdom may be celebrated in our time,
And poverty be turned to history. Amen.*

The Nazareth promise can be found in Luke chapter 4. 16-19 when Jesus opened the scroll to read part of Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth.

Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

BRICKS and Plaster, Tiles and Fuses, Glass and Paint ...

We have 5 buildings that make up the parish estate: 3 church buildings and two halls. Keeping them repaired and maintained is an ongoing process and so we are now forming a buildings group. These will be people who hold the whole estate in their sight and will recommend and often do the repairs that keep the buildings in best shape. They will have access to the survey done each 5 years on the church buildings and an older one on the Esplanade Hall. If you would like to be involved in the hands on side of the buildings across our estate there is a chance to meet Suzannah Meade the Secretary of the Chelmsford Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches at St Michael’s on Saturday 6th December at 9am and she will talk about maintenance and repair. I’m delighted that Richard Good and Keiran Hutchence have already agreed. To be part of this with me as Rector.

Praying for a less violent and more peaceful Harwich in 2026

Remembering the very high reported crime figures for assault in the town.

Lord God, who created a world where we were to relate to the creation, each other and You in peace and harmony, we pray for our town.

For those who have been the victims of violent and sexual offences; may they have outstanding support and understanding from the police, their families and friends.

For those who have committed violent and sexual offences, that they may be apprehended, begin to understand the crime they have committed and change their behaviour after sentencing.

We pray for our police. For the systems of justice. For the witnesses to these acts.

As the days pass may these rates of crime reduce as Your Spirit moves across our town.

We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Praying for the Homeless after our recent interaction with the homeless outside the Esplanade Hall and the porch at St Michael's

Heavenly Father, we pray today for all men and women who are homeless. For those sleeping under bridges, on park benches, or in doorways, we ask that you guide them to places of shelter and safety and for them to be open to being helped.

Provide them with food, water, and clean clothes, and bless them with good health, physical and mental. Send your angels to protect them and be with them.

Comfort their hearts and minds, and protect them from harm and exploitation. We ask that you inspire generosity and compassion in our hearts so that we may see your face in the eyes of every person we meet. Help us to be your hands and feet in the world, to offer practical help and love.

Grant justice to those who are powerless and inspire, our politicians, local government and agencies, to act with kindness and to be your instruments of peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

LIVING FAITH – LOVING PEOPLE