The Mid-Elloe Group of Parishes
Profile 2020
The Mid-Elloe Group of Parishes

0.5 Incumbent of the Mid Elloe Group

Who we are and what we are looking for

We are four rural parishes with two fabulous medieval and two charming Victorian church buildings, all of which are well maintained. We serve the rural communities either side of the A17 just to the North and East of Holbeach in a very pleasant and peaceful area of the fens with many opportunities for cultural and environmental enrichment.

Under our last incumbent we began to reap the benefits of working more closely together as a group and we have a deep desire to see our parishes flourish and seek a leadership that will help us develop a sense of direction for the future.

There is immense scope for outreach into the community, particularly through developing our contact with families via the children in the four schools in the benefice, but also through the Care Homes and Community Centres and the significant areas of new housing currently being built in some of our parishes.

We are seeking a priest with a pastoral heart and a real passion for Rural Ministry who is:

- Secure in their faith
- An engaging and inspiring preacher who can relate to the congregation in a down to earth manner
- Comfortable with different styles of worship
- At ease working with children and their families and making themselves known in the wider community
- Experienced enough to contribute towards the training of a curate
- Willing to enrich our deanery with a skill and passion they have for a particular area of ministry which might be offered to the wider church for example
  - Adult Education
  - Lay Training
  - Pioneering a new congregation

And can help us to:

- see the spiritual in the everyday
- deepen our discipleship and encourage us in ministry
- increase our outreach into the local community
- develop a vision for the future
- work even more effectively together as a benefice
In return we can offer you:

- A warm welcome and enthusiastic support for the challenges ahead
- Some hard-working fund-raising teams and PCCs
- Excellent catering skills
- An excellent, well presented and modern family home, next to Fleet Church
- Good local primary and secondary schools
- Full administrative support at a deanery level
- A working partnership with the benefice of Holbeach

An enhanced DBS check is required and will need to be in place prior to the appointment.

Full expenses of office will be reimbursed. It is expected that the priest will take their regular weekly day off as well as their annual holiday entitlement. The importance of study leave, Spiritual Direction and an annual retreat is recognised. They will be encouraged to use this provision to enhance their ministry and our own.

For further information or an informal conversation about this post please contact:

The Ven Justine Allain Chapman (Archdeacon of Boston)
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Tel - 01522 504039

or Rev’d Canon Rosamund Seal (Rural Dean)
Email: rosamund.seal@btinternet.com
Tel - 01406 424989

Closing Date: Sunday 23rd February 2020
Interview Date: Thursday 26th March 2020
The historic county of Lincolnshire is the second largest county in England, stretching from the Humber in the North to the Wash in the South and from Nottinghamshire and Rutland in the West to the coast of the North Sea in the East.

The Mid-Elloe group of parishes are in the south-east corner of Lincolnshire in the district of South Holland. The area is largely reclaimed from the sea, flat and criss-crossed with a network of drainage channels, dykes and roads.

The wide horizons offer both spectacular sunsets and sunrises. A huge variety of food crops, bulbs and flowers are grown in the fertile fields. There is plenty of wildlife in the fields and waterways, and the dykes and the marshlands of The Wash are a bird watcher’s paradise.

The flat landscape makes cycling easy and there are lovely walks (with or without a dog) out on the marshes which are peaceful and soul-restoring.
There are many surrounding historic sites, towns and villages. Spalding is the principal town in the district with many Georgian houses, shops and a market. Tree-lined footpaths follow the River Welland and a water taxi boat runs between the river and Springfields Shopping Outlet on the edge of the town. The sea coast, including the lovely resorts of North Norfolk, is within easy reach in 40 minutes or so by car.

The communities are largely rural and there is little unemployment, though much of the work is low paid. Some are employed in farming and the large number of food processing industries in the area, whilst other people commute to the surrounding larger towns, or even to London. Many of the newcomers, who are retired, come from the south chiefly because the housing is more affordable and they have found a warm welcome from the people of the Fens. As an area previously renowned for growing tulips there are a number of spectacular and very well-supported church flower festivals in South Holland.

The benefice is home to a number of key players in the Food Processing Industry who provide employment for a significant number of migrant workers from Eastern Europe on whom our economy has become very dependent. Many of these workers are now on permanent contracts and have lived here for several years and become integrated into the community and there are some exemplary employers in the benefice who have contributed to the work of the Clewer Initiative. Others, however, are employed by agencies on short term contracts at peak times of the year and, consequently the Modern Slavery Act is a live issue in the area, but one for which the council and the police take their responsibilities very seriously.
The Vicarage

Fleet Rectory, situated adjacent to Fleet church, and sharing a boundary fence, was built in the 1970s and extended and modernised in 2008. The house is now an excellent, comfortable and easily maintained family home. It has a large self-contained study, capable of accommodating a group of 12 people, with a downstairs cloakroom off the entrance hall.

There is a kitchen/diner, dining room and large sitting room downstairs. Upstairs are four bedrooms, a family bathroom with a separate toilet, a large en-suite bathroom off the master bedroom and a spacious storage area above the garage. It has a single garage, several brick built outbuildings, parking space for several cars and a large garden, currently laid mainly to grass, but with a lot of scope for a keen gardener.

Note: The two proposed extensions/alterations shown were completed in 2008
Local Facilities

Medical Care
There are chemists and doctors’ surgeries in Holbeach and Long Sutton. NHS hospitals are the Queen Elizabeth in King's Lynn, the Pilgrim Hospital in Boston, Johnson Community Hospital in Spalding, Peterborough City Hospital and the Fitzwilliam in Peterborough—all within easy reach. In Wisbech there is the North Cambridgeshire Hospital, a satellite of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and in Holbeach there is a Cottage Hospital offering hospice and respite care for the local community as well as long term care for the elderly.

Education
The children within the parishes generally attend their local primary schools. There are Community Primary Schools in Fleet (161 on roll), Holbeach Bank (68 on roll) and in Gedney (77 on roll) and a Church of England Primary School at Holbeach St Marks (51 on roll). Others travel into one of the two large primary schools in Holbeach. Lincolnshire still maintains a selective system at 11+ and pupils travel into Spalding Grammar School (for boys) and Spalding High School (for girls). Other local secondary schools are the University of Lincoln Academy in Holbeach, The Spalding Academy and the University Academy Long Sutton. There is also an independent fee-paying Grammar School in Wisbech, catering for children up to age 18 with an infant section for ages 4+. There is a secondary school for children with moderate learning difficulties and also a 4-18 school for those with severe learning difficulties in Spalding.

Community groups and activities There are a large range of volunteer and community groups in the area and lots to do! The following will just give you a taste of some of them. Drama groups for all ages, art classes, Rotary, U3A, Air & Army Cadets, Beavers, Scouts and Adventurer Explorers, public cinemas, swimming pools and theatres, bowls, football, tennis, dance classes, yoga and some excellent golf courses!

Communications
Apart from the A17, which bisects the benefice, the roads are largely rural and used by agricultural, domestic and an increasing amount of commercial traffic serving the local food producing industry. Rail connections to London and the Midlands are from King’s Lynn, Spalding and Peterborough. The journey to King’s Cross takes 55 minutes from Peterborough and 1 hour 50 minutes from Kings Lynn. Local bus services run regularly between Spalding and King’s Lynn. There is a bus service (505) which runs between Kings Lynn and Spalding which travels through Gedney, Fleet and Holbeach, with up to two buses an hour on weekdays and Saturdays, between 7am and 7pm, and at least one per hour on Sundays between 9am and 6pm. For the outlying villages, Call-Connect is an ‘on demand’ bus service that operates in response to pre-booked requests and links to a hub that connects to the aforementioned 505 Service. There is no fixed timetable as the route the bus takes is defined by passenger demand and can differ each day. The major city centres of Peterborough (25 miles), Lincoln (45 miles) and Cambridge (55 miles) are within reach by road. There are good shopping areas in Spalding, Holbeach and Long Sutton and, slightly further afield in Boston and Kings Lynn.
The Benefice

The Mid Elloe group of churches has been working together under a single incumbent since 2010 and became a legal benefice in its own right in July 2014. It consists of the parishes of Fleet, Gedney (including the village of Gedney Dyke), Holbeach Hurn (which includes the hamlet of Holbeach Clough and the village of Holbeach Bank) and Holbeach St Marks (which also includes the village of Holbeach St Matthew, with its now redundant church).

The individual parishes have explored the possibility of forming themselves into one or two united parishes in the past and are willing to revisit this idea in the future, in order to reduce the administrative burden and to work more effectively together.

2018 Parish statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population 2011 census</th>
<th>ER</th>
<th>ASA</th>
<th>Baptisms</th>
<th>Weddings</th>
<th>Funerals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fleet</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gedney</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holbeach St Marks</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holbeach Hurn</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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Current Service Patterns

The table below shows the service pattern operating during the vacancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fleet</th>
<th>Gedney</th>
<th>H St Marks</th>
<th>H Hurn</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Sunday</td>
<td>9.00 Communion</td>
<td>11.00 M Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Sunday</td>
<td>9.00 Communion</td>
<td>11.00 Communion</td>
<td>11.00 M Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd Sunday</td>
<td>9.00 Choral Matins</td>
<td>11.00 M Prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.00 Communion</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th Sunday</td>
<td>11.00 Communion</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.00 Communion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5th Sunday</td>
<td>11.00 Benefice Holy Communion which rotates round the churches</td>
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Parish Magazine

The benefice produces a monthly magazine – the ‘The Mid-Elloe Villager’ which has recently engaged a new editor following the retirement of the previous one. It currently has a circulation of 540 copies and is delivered to many households in the four parishes, as well as being available on the website every month.
The Deanery of Elloe East

The Deanery of Elloe East consists of 18 parishes organised into 6 benefices each with its own incumbent. It is currently staffed by 3 full-time stipendiary clergy, and one recently appointed House for Duty priest. We also have the support of two (OLM) locally ordained priests, one of whom works part time as a hospital chaplain. There is one Reader and two Readers with PTO and two active retired priests with PTO. The Vicar of Holbeach is also the Rural Dean. The clergy chapter meet monthly (except in August) for mutual support, creative thinking and to feedback and discuss diocesan initiatives.

The deanery has undergone considerable changes in personnel since 2013 and is beginning to think of ways to develop a new pattern of working together. The Rural Dean would very much like to encourage the deanery to build on the good relationships already in place and to work more closely together. Any new incumbent will be invited to take a full part in how we plan and implement this. The majority of the parishes in the deanery (including this benefice) have obtained funding towards administrative costs from a local charitable trust.

A Deanery Administrator was consequently appointed in February 2019 on a 16 hour a week contract working Monday – Thursday 9.00-1.00 from an accessible office based in the building used by Holbeach Parish Council. The administrator is responsible for booking in all baptisms, weddings and funerals and ensuring that churches and clergy have all the information they need. She has developed a google diary for each benefice and will be able to do printing, prepare pew sheets and send out bulk mailings for the parishes. She is proving just the mix of efficiency and friendliness that we had hoped for and is already making the deanery more efficient thereby reducing the administrative burden on clergy and freeing up clergy time for more active ministry.

The deanery has also been offered a commitment of £20,000 per annum from the local Mary Bass Trust towards the appointment of a Deanery Children’s and Youth worker who will also have some responsibilities within the diocese for facilitating the development of work with children and young people, and we are hopeful that we will be able to get this appointment set up and running during the course of 2019. In anticipation of this we have already set up and trained a lay team of people to run Open The Book assemblies within our local schools. So there is a lot to look forward to......
The 6 benefices in the deanery and the envisaged Mission Communities are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission Community 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Elloe Stone Parishes – Moulton, Moulton Chapel,</td>
<td>Rev’d Gareth Atha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whaplode &amp; Holbeach St Johns</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Elloe Fen Parishes - Whaplode Drove, Gedney Hill,</td>
<td>Rev’d Mike Ongyerth – 0.5 post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton St Edmund, Sutton St James &amp; Tydd St Mary</td>
<td>(House for duty prior to Jan 2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(transferred Jan 2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton Bridge (with Tydd St Mary prior to January 2020)</td>
<td>Vacant 0.5 post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Community 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holbeach</td>
<td>Rev’d Rosamund Seal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Rural Dean)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Mid-Elloe group – Gedney, Fleet, Holbeach St Mark &amp;</td>
<td>Vacant 0.5 post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holbeach Hurn</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mission Community 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Sutton with Lutton &amp; Dawsmere</td>
<td>Rev’d Jonathan Sibley</td>
</tr>
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Gardens at Springfields, Spalding
The Churches and Church life

St Mary Magdalene, Fleet

The Village

Fleet has a remarkable history which dates back to before the 11th century. The name comes from the Anglo Saxon ‘Fleet’, meaning ‘where the tide flows’. Jocelyn of Fleet was active on the first Crusade to the Holy Land in 1098 and the Knights’ Templar held lands running from the Church down the side of Maes Dyke in the village. Fleet was granted its own fair on St Mary Magdalen’s Day, July 22nd; and in 1260 Fleet was recorded as being bigger than Spalding.

The parish comprises of three areas: Fleet, Fleet Hargate, and an area of housing which feels to be part of Holbeach. They are home to many retired people and young families. The many benefits of the community include low unemployment and low crime rates. The popular village school, Fleet Wood Lane School (OfSTED rated Good), is very close to the vicarage and church. There is also a pre-school/nursery in Fleet Hargate, as well as a nursing home (Field House) and a home for people with learning difficulties (Capricorn Cottage). Local businesses and small industrial units are well supported and surviving happily.

There is certainly plenty that encourages a good sense of community and village life. The Parish Council are proactive in ensuring the village looks tidy and attractive, with plenty of well-kept open spaces where children can play and dogs and their owners enjoy walks. The

Hargate Close Community Hall hosts a variety of activities throughout the week, such as the Fleet Welcome Group. The Anglia Motel on the A17 holds rallies and events throughout the year in support of the Royal British Legion, Help for Heroes and other worthy causes. With a traditional pub in the village, as well as a farm shop and cafe the parish has a strong personal identity that people value. There is also a small but thriving Baptist Church, which serves the local area in Fleet Hargate.
The Church Building

Tradition holds that Fleet Church was built by the monks of Castle Acre. The church itself has a detached tower and hides many gems, including exquisitely carved oak choir stalls; a number of memorials; its own stone carved Imp, far more impious than its Lincoln cousin; the Royal Arms of William of Orange (William II), dated 1698, situated above the door and of Queen Victoria, at present in the Sacristy; and a 15th century octagonal font. The church is open daily and many visitors show appreciation of it being a delightful rural church, very well cared for.

Church Life

Whilst the regular Sunday congregation may be rather small in number, they are dedicated and determined in their pride and care for the church. They offer a warm, friendly welcome to visitors and have many friends and supporters who attend and help with fundraising ventures and special services. There are 10 PCC members, including 2 Churchwardens, a Secretary and Treasurer.

Although there is no choir, there is an excellent organist, who with the retiring vicar, has ensured that good musical traditions are maintained and the worship is enhanced by sung sections in the Eucharist. Compline is also sung at certain times in the year. Members of the congregation read lessons and act as Intercessors.

Whilst the Parish Share grows ever more difficult to meet, the present PCC and congregation show a resilience and resolve in reaching the best target figure they possibly can each year, and paid the Share in full in 2018. To this end there are a number of successful fund raising events during the year: 50/50 Club with monthly draws of 3 prizes; a 4 day Flower Festival, held during the last weekend in May; a Family Fun Afternoon held in September; and an Arts and Crafts Festival held in November.

Outreach events are regularly discussed at PCC meetings. Parish meals, enjoyable social occasions as well as raising funds, are shared at certain times of the year for example at Epiphany and Harvest.
The PCC has recently agreed to join the Diocesan funded ‘Parish Giving Scheme’. It is hoped that this will encourage people in the local community to offer regular monthly or annual gifts to support the future needs of our beautiful heritage building and graveyard. There are also a number of Trust Funds that support particular projects and activities. For example, the Mary Magdalene Trust fund the Portaloo hire every month; a section of grass cutting and tidying of the churchyard, which is extremely well maintained, is also funded. The Parish Council also have some responsibility for supporting the maintenance of the churchyard.

The Mary Bass Trustees regularly part fund the insurance of the church building and will always look favourably on helping with costlier projects, so that the fabric of the church can be kept in good order. In the past year they have supported children’s activities and funded the purchase of new lightweight, portable tables that are more practical and manageable for outreach events.

In Fleet our encouragement of work with children is becoming a priority. Every class in the local school visited church for an exploratory session last year. They come to church for a number of services during the year, such as Harvest and a Christmas Carol Service. There is a good relationship with the Baptist Church, whose minister is a Governor of the school. In 2018 a Christingle service was introduced for the older children. The school also provides displays for events during the year and is very supportive in helping us to advertise and promote new initiatives, such as Family Fun sessions.
Aspirations

This is a beautiful rural church, situated next door to the vicarage. It is a place of historic importance and the Visitors’ book reveals the special place it holds in the minds of many people from both near and far. We believe there is enormous potential for any incumbent to make a real impression and support a willing and hard-working congregation to move forward, encouraging the community to participate more fully in church life.

We understand and appreciate the problems, but we are determined not to be discouraged and to work hard to welcome and engage with new initiatives, as well as maintaining aspects of the traditional worship that is the spiritual core of each person who worships here regularly. We value our heritage, but at the same time seek a path of innovation.

St Mary Magdalene, Gedney

The Village

The village of Gedney is a widely dispersed, rural community of around 1,500 people. The majority of the population lives in the Chapelgate/Old Main Road area to the north of the A17, and includes the village of Gedney Dyke, in the north of the parish. There is also a significant population to the south of the A17 surrounding the church and the adjacent village school (OfSTED rated Good).

Gedney boasts two village halls (one in Gedney Dyke) and a pub along with large areas of amenity grass, playing fields and public footpaths. There is a Garden Centre with a Tea Room on Old Main Road, Gedney.

The Church Building

The imposing tower of St Mary Magdalene, Gedney proudly overlooks the A17 which is the main road link for the four parishes in the group. The Church was founded in 1215 but there was almost certainly an earlier place of worship on the site in Saxon times.

The present church has been enlarged twice and three distinct styles of architecture can clearly be seen, constructed of three different but compatible limestones: Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular. The church is opened daily.

The Church was extensively refurbished in 1896 - 98 when the Chancel roof was replaced and much lead work renewed. It is thought that the former pews were taken out at that time. The spacious and adaptable nave and side aisles and the wonderful acoustics make this church a popular venue for concerts and recitals with a seating capacity in excess of 400, and often enhanced by our well maintained, two manual 1932 Cousins organ. The adjacent Primary School (77 on roll) makes good use of the Church for concerts and plays etc., and uses the North Aisle for PE activities during inclement weather.
Gedney’s unusually light and airy interior is due mainly to the landmine which exploded close to the church in 1941, blowing out most of the Victorian painted glass. The medieval Jesse window in the North Aisle was painstakingly reconstructed as near as possible to its original state after the war, whilst the remainder of the Church was re-glazed in plain glass.

The PCC has been very active in recent years with improvements to maintain and enhance the integrity of the building. These include South Aisle lead and timber replacement, electrification of the clock and a totally reconditioned heating system in 2006.

Further major works have been completed more recently. In the autumn of 2012 internal toilets with disabled facilities were constructed at the base of the tower, with the ringing floor relocated above. This much needed project has proved to be a huge success, with the unexpected spin-off of a resurgence of interest in bell-ringing – a very pleasant surprise.

The Church was completely re-wired in November 2013 and passed its five-year inspection in early 2019. All the above works were aided by the Mary Bass Trust Charity, our greatest benefactor and to whom we are greatly indebted.

The Trust’s generosity has enabled Gedney Church to maintain its position as one of the most admired places of worship in the locality. We have recently improved our servery and have plans to decorate the vestry, improve the amplification system and are currently refurbishing our main doors. We aim to continue to pay our Parish Share in full, and our 2018 accounts can be viewed on request.
Church Life
St Mary Magdalene’s congregation is not large but is very active and the Church is held in high esteem locally. The PCC has rated the church as a category 2 church (a local mission church). A highly successful Parish Funding Programme in 2006 has helped to secure our financial position for the foreseeable future. The Church’s Flower Festival in July and now in its 52nd year, and the Candlelit Christmas Carol Service, are eagerly awaited attractions throughout the district and beyond.

The Parochial Church Council is extremely anxious to increase our interaction with children and younger adults. We have a close relationship with our village school, and involve the schoolchildren in activities such as quizzes, an annual Easter egg hunt, and, of course, a Christmas Christingle service.

Aspirations
Our Visitors’ book contains two recurring themes – ‘Thank you for being open’, and ‘an airy and light place of peace’. These two statements characterise our aspirations, along with the comments regularly received that we are a welcoming and friendly bunch.
The village of Holbeach Hurn is situated three miles north-east of the small market town of Holbeach. The name Hurn comes from the Saxon word Hyrne which has several connotations, the favourite being “Bank”. At one time the village was on the coast, being protected by the old Roman sea bank which was close by.

It is a relatively small, delightful village consisting of around 160 households. The centre of the village is dominated by the church and village hall. There is a public house and touring caravan site a small distance away from the centre which has recently been taken over by new owners. The village is surrounded by four or five family owned farming estates and is ideally situated with many places of interest nearby. The sea marsh and sea bank, both ecological and wildlife wonders, is only four or five miles away.

Holbeach Hurn is extremely fortunate to have a fine village hall, converted from the old school building and situated adjacent to St. Luke's church with adequate car parking facilities. The hall has undergone significant developments and with the help of substantial lottery grant monies, has had quite a considerable make-over to include excellent kitchen facilities, toilets, a modern bar area, and meeting and storage rooms. The hall is licensed to hold up to 120 people. It is well used and provides the basis for various village activities, teaching groups, sporting events, business meetings and private parties. Adjacent to the village hall is a well-kept playing field which includes an adequately equipped Children's Area.

The village of Holbeach Bank with its 66 pupil school and the hamlet of Holbeach Clough which are two miles north of Holbeach are now being looked after by the parish of Holbeach and are in the process of transferring legally from the benefice of Holbeach Hurn to the benefice of Holbeach.
The Church Building
The Church of St. Luke the Evangelist was completed in 1870 at a cost of £697 and designed by the same architect who built Holbeach St. Marks as well as Holbeach St. Matthew and Gedney Dawsmere. Prior to that it had a small chapel and was part of the Parish of Holbeach. Many of the windows and artefacts in the church have been donated by local farming families who have been long term benefactors of the church.

Today St. Luke’s Holbeach Hurn stands strongly in the knowledge that its fabric both internally and externally is in excellent condition, its church yard is well cared for, its heating system is second to none (visitors have said that in winter it must be the warmest church in Lincolnshire) and is supported financially by local businesses and loyal parishioners.

Church Life
St. Luke’s is extremely fortunate in having two dedicated Church Wardens, a loyal PCC and sidespeople. We have two committed organists who take it in turns to play our organ which was rebuilt nine years ago.

The size of our congregation depends a little on whether we get members of other parishes in our group on their days without a service, but it usually numbers between 8 and 14. Our Harvest Festival, Easter and Christmas services are always well attended. We had our last major Stewardship Campaign in 2007 with a mini update 3 years ago. At the present time we have 21 Planned Giving members, all with Banker’s Orders and 5 local farm businesses again with banker’s orders (but no Gift Aid) and also rely on various collections and Gift Aid from private giving, to boost our regular income.

At the moment our current income is just about allowing us to break even. The recent mini fund raising campaign was disappointing, which indicates more effort will have to be devoted to this in the not too distant future. There is no doubt that we are concerned about the present and future membership of our church, and that we need to develop particular ways and means of establishing a better cross-section of ages and numbers of family attendees in our congregations to come.

Aspirations
To strive to keep St Luke’s open to serve the needs of our parish. Try to develop a church led project, such as hosting occasional sociable light lunches.
St Marks, Holbeach St Marks

The Village
The village is six miles from the main town of Holbeach and is popular with cyclists, (it is part of National Cycle Route 1), great for dog walkers and has spectacular sunrises and sunsets.

Farming is predominant in this rural area, consisting of a number of large farms and associated food processing, in particular Bakkavor which sits on the outskirts of the village and has over 1,000 employees in its Pizza Factory and a similar number making sandwiches and salads, which are sold nationwide in most supermarkets. Bakkavor also plays host to a professionally equipped Community Gym, in case you have eaten too many pizzas!

The housing estate behind the church has increased housing in the village by a third and has brought in new people, mainly from outside Lincolnshire and consequently increasing the diversity of the village, which has been welcomed, and a number of whom attend the church. The primary school continues to benefit from this. Our neighbouring village Holbeach St Matthews is now part of St Marks Parish since the church was made redundant and sold to a private developer.

The small Church School is federated with Gedney Drove End School and Westmere School at Sutton Bridge under an executive head. At present there are 51 pupils ranging from pre-school to year 6 and the school is rated ‘Good’ at their last OfSTED inspection in 2018.

The school is happy to welcome a priest to take a regular morning assembly and uses the church for its Easter, Christingle, Harvest Festival and a Leavers service, as well as other events. The school also works closely with the modern Village Hall, where the school holds numerous events throughout the year.

The Village Hall hosts the traditional Harvest Supper following the Harvest Festival Service which is well attended. There is a regular monthly social night at the Village Hall to welcome new people to the village.

Behind the Village Hall is a large playing field with up to date children’s play equipment and a multi-use tarmac sports facility.

Public Transport is via the popular Call Connect mini bus which has to be booked in advance, but links to the main town of Holbeach, from where you can connect to Spalding and Kings Lynn via the main 505 bus route.
The Church Building
The church is a Victorian brick building built in 1869, which has just had its 150th Anniversary celebrations and is grade 2 listed. A new vestry with a sink and toilet facilities was built on the rear in the 1980s when the vicarage was sold and is capable of seating about 20 people for small meetings.

A large burial ground surrounds the church, with 130 grave spaces still available on the extended ground to the west side and an area designated for cremated remains.

The most recent quinquennial report only cited small non-urgent repairs as we have had a new roof and central heating boiler plus repainting of interior in recent years. We will shortly be putting in new windows in the vestry. We are fortunate that The Mary Bass charity pays 3/4 of our insurance and helps towards repairs. The church is opened on a key-holder basis.

Church Life
We currently have two Churchwardens, a secretary who also teaches at the primary school and a treasurer with extensive experience in the banking industry, along with two other experienced members of the PCC, which we hope to build on. We use the Village Hall for bigger events such as the Village Harvest Supper.

Aspirations
Our congregation averages 8-10 people, but this tends to differ between the 9.00 am congregation and the 11.00 am congregation. Most age ranges are covered even if in single numbers. Our Christmas service regularly attracts in excess of 35 people.

We pay our Parish Share in full when we can afford it, which we manage most years. We have been used to having two services a month, (we serve coffee and biscuits after the 9.00 am service), which enable the congregation to socialise and pass on information about people in need of our prayers or a visit.