Our parish of Greenstead with St Anne’s is situated in northeast Colchester and is within the Diocese of Chelmsford. The parish is densely populated, comprising around 20000 people, and can be divided into four distinct communities – two have significant levels of deprivation, and the other two are more affluent. Overall, the parish has a high proportion of unemployed or economically inactive residents, and there is also a large student population in the Greenstead area.

We are serious about evangelism and want to offer all our residents the opportunity to engage with the Gospel message and encounter the love of God. Furthermore, we aim to champion social action and community engagement, and so we are part of the Inclusive Church network and open our doors to anyone and everyone - aiming to love them as we are loved by God.

A group of people wearing robes

Description automatically generatedThe ministry team includes a Team Vicar/Pioneer; an Associate Priest; a Curate and a Licensed Lay Minister. Through our work, we have seen how the message of hope and acceptance is truly transformational in this community, which is fraught with the persistent agonies of poverty and isolation. Consequently, much of what we do has strong community links, as well as being evangelistic.

We are blessed with three church buildings (see images below): St Anne’s Church situated in the west of the parish, serving the St Anne’s housing estate; St Matthew’s situated in the centre of the parish, serving the Parson’s Heath area; and St Andrew’s on the Greenstead estate, which also serves the more affluent Longridge estate.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| St Anne’s Church |  | St Matthew’s Church |  | St Andrew’s Church |
| A room with chairs and a table  Description automatically generated |  | A room with chairs and a table with a cross  Description automatically generated |  |  |

Each Sunday we have Church@10 at St Anne’s which is our more accessible worship suitable for families and for those exploring faith. Children with Autism and other mental health issues are particularly relaxed in this worship space. As St Anne’s Church also has a large rear garden, this is where we hold our Free Family Holiday Breakfast Clubs and our Christmas and Summer Community fairs.

St Matthew’s Church is home to our inclusive Open Table Network service once a month and to our Messy Church also held monthly.

St Andrew’s is our 12th Century listed building on the Greenstead estate, where we have a more traditional Common Worship Holy Communion each Sunday and an All Age/All-Together service once a month. All the major festivals are celebrated at St Andrew’s and most of the pastoral services take place here. It is the church that has seen the most growth, but sadly, it is not equipped to accommodate the numbers that we see in church. We also hold a weekly Open Church afternoon at St Andrew’s, which are wonderful opportunities to meet local families and to signpost those who need help, to other agencies on the estate.

There are many opportunities to connect with families that use or worship in our churches, for example, St Anne’s and St Matthew’s are hired out every weekday in term-time to a pre-school that caters for local low-income families. Also, most evenings, the buildings are used for our local Scouting and Guiding group meetings. We have a good relationship with our hirers and there have been opportunities to invite them into church at certain times and seasons in the year.

We have six primary schools in the parish and we have good relationships with all of them. We go into our local Church of England Primary School every week for an assembly as well as at other times for special seasonal occasions. We visit the other schools, or they come to St Andrew’s at Harvest, Christmas, Easter and for leaving services.

Hands holding a large transparent ball

Description automatically generatedWe also hold Prayer Space activities at the end of term for the year 6 children and work closely with [CYO Colchester](https://www.cyocolchester.org.uk/) to receive training and ideas for other prayer resources during the year.

We have also set up and now help run, a ‘St Andrew’s Stay and Play’ group that is hosted weekly by one of the local primary schools (term time only). This is a great place to meet parents/carers from the estate to build up relationships with them.

This is a busy and diverse parish which has so many opportunities for bringing the message of hope and the Good News to so many people. We hope that you would like to share in our enthusiasm for this important work.