

Cambridge Judge Business School

REACH Ely Case Study Series

Reimagining Churches as Community Assets  
for the Common Good

# ALL SAINTS RAMPTON

John Spencer & Co  
LONDON.

MURDOCH, MURDOCH & CO  
CAMBRIDGE.

*Text, design, and photography*

**Dr Timur Alexandrov**

Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation  
Cambridge Judge Business School

**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.

*Editorial board*

**Dr Helen Haugh**

Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation  
Cambridge Judge Business School

**Geoffrey Hunter**

Diocese of Ely

*The project is implemented by*

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

*with the generous support of Allchurches Trust  
and Historic England*

**[www.reachely.org](http://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](http://www.reachely.org)

*On the cover: Old piano in All Saints' church, Rampton.*

Copyright © 2020 University of Cambridge. All rights reserved. The authors gratefully acknowledge financial support from The Ely Diocesan Board of Finance under research grant ref RG95970.

# ALL SAINTS RAMPTON

**Church Category:** Rural

**Deanery:** North Stowe

**Address:** Church End, Rampton,  
Cambridge CB24 5PS

**Website:** [www.allsaintsrampton.org](http://www.allsaintsrampton.org)



## Summary

**Buildings and Artefacts:** Festival church; Grade II\* listed building; Church footpath; Thatched nave roof; Fragments from Saxon coffin lids; Blocked Norman window; Exceptionally wide chancel arch; Remains of medieval wall paintings; 12th century limestone font; Medieval fragments of stained glass

**Congregation to Population Ratio:** 7 / 448

**Fundraising:** Friends of All Saints; Individual giving; Rampton Action Group; Concerts and wine tasting events

**Income Generation:** Land assets rental

**Communications:** New church website; Facebook page for Cottenham with Rampton parish; Church page in Rampton Village Newsletter; Visitors' book; posters, flyers, and pamphlets; Church noticeboard

**Community Engagement:** Rampton Action Group; Prayer Tree; Opening and cleaning rota; Bell-ringing teams; Services at key festivals; Concerts; Champing; Integration into village activities.

# ROOTS

## Profile

---

Rampton is a small village on the edge of the Fens, six miles to the north of Cambridge. Rampton sits midway between the neighbouring and much larger villages of Cottenham and Willingham. In 2011, Rampton had a resident population of 448 individuals. The parish covers some 554 hectares and is a largely agricultural area. Two major roads – the A14 to the west and the A10 to the east – surround the village.

Rampton has long been one of the smallest of the fen-edge villages north-west of Cambridge. In 1086 there were 19 tenants and the village grew only slowly over the centuries, with the largest expansion of houses seen after the Second World War. The village today is nucleated with settlements spreading out from a central triangular village green.

Village amenities include a village hall and a public house (opened around 1850). Nearby Cottenham has a larger number of amenities, including a village hall and two schools. The parish churches at Cottenham and Willingham are the closest places of worship to Rampton and both are open in the daytime.

Nearby Rampton is the earthwork called Giant's Hill, standing between the village and Rampton bridge, comprises a low rectangular flat-topped mound surrounded by a deep ditch. Its location near the fen edge and some constructional features are similar to those of Burwell castle in Cambridgeshire.





Top: Eastern view of All Saints Rampton with thatched nave roof.  
Bottom: Church noticeboard in the main street and public footpath towards the church.

## Building

---

The medieval church of All Saints is a Grade II\* listed building that sits at the centre of Rampton village. It has a thatched roof – once common in Cambridgeshire but now a rare survivor – and is nestled amongst ancient yew trees. Since 2018, the church has been partnered with nearby Cottenham as a Festival Church in the Parish of Cottenham with Rampton.

The exact origins of All Saints church are unknown, however the Saxon grave slabs and fragments of a cross embedded in the east wall of the church show that people have worshipped on the site for over a thousand years. The church is constructed from puddingstone and limestone rubble, with some fieldstone and limestone and clunch dressings. The later porch is constructed from red bricks.

The earliest surviving structure in the church is the chancel arch. The two columns date from the 12th century. The Lady Chapel was also added at this time. Major alterations to the fabric of the church were made in the 15th century, when the remaining two pillars were added between the nave and where the organ now stands. The bell tower may have been built in the 14th century as a separate free-standing building, or may have been constructed with the extension of the nave in the 15th century.

The current 'Queen post' roof is reputed to have originally been part of a building at Barnwell Priory that was destroyed during the Reformation. The roof fits All Saints' rather imperfectly, being rather steeply pitched and this has allowed the survival of the thatch; the roof and walls could not support the weight of tiles.

Further additions were made to the church in the 19th century, notably the porch and vestry. The final major phase of construction occurred in the early part of the 20th century with the restoration of the East window to its former size and included the recently uncovered Saxon stonework in the rebuilding of the East wall. New pews were also installed, which are faithful copies of the medieval originals, one of which was left intact. It was around this time that the tower gained a further three bells, taking the total to today's six.

All Saints church is not visible from the main road in the village, but a clear noticeboard indicates the direction towards the church via a new footpath, which was laid in the churchyard. The church has a sound system with microphones. Rampton church is open in the daytime and this is organised by a rota of volunteers, who are responsible for opening the church on a weekly basis. The building can accommodate approximately 120 people.



*Top: South entrance porch; East window and High Altar. Middle: Seating arrangement in the nave and remains of wall paintings. Bottom: North wall of the church; Rampton village hall.*

### Artefacts

---

During the medieval period All Saints church would have looked very different to the present bare white walls. The interior would have been highly decorated and brightly painted. Fortunately, some of the early paintings have survived and are exposed, mainly on the north wall of the nave – reminders of how colourful churches once were. The first simple painting consists of a red brick design with a single red flower inside each brick. This is followed by a more naturalistic pattern in green and red, depicting wild vines. On top of this has been painted a faded portrait of St Christopher with Christ on his shoulder. The last painting is also the most badly damaged, but is possibly of St George riding out to meet the Dragon. A shield bearing a red cross, a lance and possibly a feathered helmet can be seen in good light.

Only a few pieces of stained glass remain, but there are some nice medieval fragments in the east window of the south aisle. In the north wall, there is a decorated tomb recess underneath an ogee arch. Inside is the effigy of a De L'Isle in full crusader garb carrying a long shield and a sword rested across his body. His face is blurred with age but his feet rest on a very characterful lion. The communion rail, with its vase-shaped balusters dates from the early 18th century. The pulpit is early 17th century. The east wall of the chancel has fragments of pre-Conquest coffin lids carved with interlace work reset in the wall. The font dates from around the 12th century and is constructed from limestone. The church has pews dating from the Victorian era.

*The nave with Victorian pews. Opposite page: View towards East window from the nave.*





# RUNNING

## Team

---

All Saints church is part of the parish of Cottenham with Rampton that used to be two separate parishes. The ministry team of All Saints church includes the Rector and two churchwardens, the latter being predominantly responsible for All Saints Church in Cottenham, which takes up the majority of their time. However, they are starting to get more involved in the running of All Saints Rampton. Because of the small size of the congregation, Rampton was unable to form a church council for some years.

## Religious Services

---

As a Festival Church, services are limited to special events, such as Good Friday, Easter Day, Harvest Festival, Pimms and Hymns in August, and Christmas. This typically amounts to six services per year. The church is obliged to have a minimum of six services to remain open. Some of the congregation from Cottenham attend these services to support the dwindling congregation at Rampton.

During the coronavirus pandemic and the national lockdown in spring 2020, Rampton church was closed but the Rector remained in contact with parishioners through phone calls, a weekly Pastoral Letter and through livestreaming services.



“I’ve tried to encourage the church families of Cottenham and Rampton to see themselves as one church with two buildings. I want to encourage those who were regular church attenders at Rampton to come to Cottenham to worship on a Sunday, and three of the original seven have. But I also want to encourage Cottenham church members to support Rampton by coming to the services held there. So far, this has been very successful.”

**Revd Lynda Davies**  
Rector

### **Fundraising**

---

**Friends of All Saints group** was founded more than ten years ago. It largely consists of non-worshippers who are interested in preserving the medieval building for future generations. It has a committee of eight people and approximately 20 members. They run a stall at the village fete and lay on a range of social events that bring in between £2,000 and £5,000 per annum. They have raised £25,000 since being established. Popular events include the annual Last Night at the Proms, with a meal and a live link-up to the event at the Royal Albert Hall, and the annual wine-tasting evening, both held in the village hall.

**Individual giving.** Current individual giving covers approximately half of the parish share.

**Rampton Action Group (RAG).** This group was established in 2018 when the church became a Festival Church. It consists of both church members and members of the community. The action group is a sub-committee of the Cottenham and Rampton PCC. The group brings together skills from the community, e.g. individuals with backgrounds in finance and archaeology, to manage the finances and the upkeep of the church and to make sure that it remains open. RAG works hand in hand with the Friends group in terms of fundraising. The group meets every other month and manages some of the trust funds. Three of these trust funds were established to support the repair and maintenance of the church.



Prayer Tree, the nave, and south aisle.

## Parish Share

---

Prior to becoming a Festival Church, Rampton paid its parish share (c. £5,500) through monthly contributions and events. However, since the change of status and fewer services, Rampton has been unable to raise a full parish share, which is now subsidised by All Saints in Cottenham.

## Income Generation

---

**Rental income.** Rampton has a village hall – set just across the road from All Saints church – and, given the size of the community, there is little demand for lettings of the church. The condition of the church also means that it is unsuitable for private hire as there are no WC or kitchen facilities. However, the church owns several plots of land in the village rented out to the parish council for allotments. Some of it is rented out to individuals for horse grazing, for stables, providing an income towards the upkeep of the church.

## Communications

---

A new **website** has recently been launched; it was built by a member of the Rampton Action Group who is an owner of the local public house (*see Community*). The website provides information on services, the history of the church, and ways to donate. There is a **Facebook page** serving All Saints Cottenham and Rampton to which Rampton contributes. Rampton has a monthly **newsletter** that goes out in print and is available online to every Rampton resident. There is a **church page** in the newsletter, organised by Rampton Action Group (RAG). A **Visitors' Book** is available in the church. Special events are promoted via **posters and flyers** posted through residents' letterboxes. The church provides **pamphlets** on aspects of church history. A church **noticeboard** is set by the main road in the village.

# REACH

## Community

---

**Rampton Action Group (RAG)** was formed following a public meeting led by the Archdeacon to gauge the community's opinions about the future of the church prior to its change of status to a Festival Church. It is a sub-committee of the Cottenham and Rampton Parochial Church Council and reports to that group (*see Fundraising*).

**Prayer Tree** is a popular fixture for the community and for visitors to the church. Many prayer cards have been added to the tree. Cottenham Church also has a prayer tree.

**Opening/cleaning rota.** A number of volunteers – not necessarily church members – open and clean the church on a regular basis. The closed churchyard is maintained by the parish council.

**Bell-ringing.** The bells are rung whenever there is a service and the church welcomes visits from teams of bell-ringers. When All Saints church in Longstanton was closed for reordering recently, their bell-ringers were able to practise at Rampton church.

## Events

---

**Easter, Christmas and Harvest festival.** These are some of the main events in the church calendar that are held at All Saints and are well publicised. The church will also hold a 'Pimms and Hymns' event in August.

**Champing.** The Cottenham with Rampton scout group were planning to hold a sleepover in the church.



*Top: Rampton Pimms and Hymns event. Bottom: Bell-ringing on Easter 2019 and Harvest festival (Photos by Rampton church).*

### Engagement

---

**Community volunteers.** All Saints has attracted a number of community volunteers with a range of skills to oversee the maintenance and running of the church. The owner of the Black Horse public house is keen to see the church remain as a feature of the village, and has donated his time to building a new website for All Saints.

**Public meeting.** The views of the village on the future use of the church were canvassed at a village meeting led by the Archdeacon, leading to the setting up of the Rampton Action Group. There was reluctant acceptance of the need to make the change from a parish to a festival church at the time.

**Integration into village activities.** The vicar attends village events, such as the Christmas meals funded and organised by the 77 Club, and the church participates in the village fete. A number of villagers have communicated their views about the church and issues surrounding church funding to the vicar at these events (*see Challenges*).

**Activities for children.** The church had gone to some effort to put on activities for Harvest Festival that would appeal to children but, of the 14 people who attended in 2018, none were children. Activities such as Messy Church are offered at Cottenham Church. Given the small number of children living in the village, it is not felt that it would be worthwhile to plan events in Rampton and expect the larger number of children living in Cottenham to attend.

“I, as the Rector, do my utmost to make sure that I am at most community events that are held in this village, so I happily go along to fetes, the annual horse show, switching on of the Christmas lights, etc. It’s important for me to be a visible presence in the village and for people to know that despite the church becoming a festival church, they still have the services of their vicar.”

**Revd Lynda Davies**

Rector



*Surviving wall paintings on the north wall of the nave.*

# REFLECTIONS

## Challenges

---

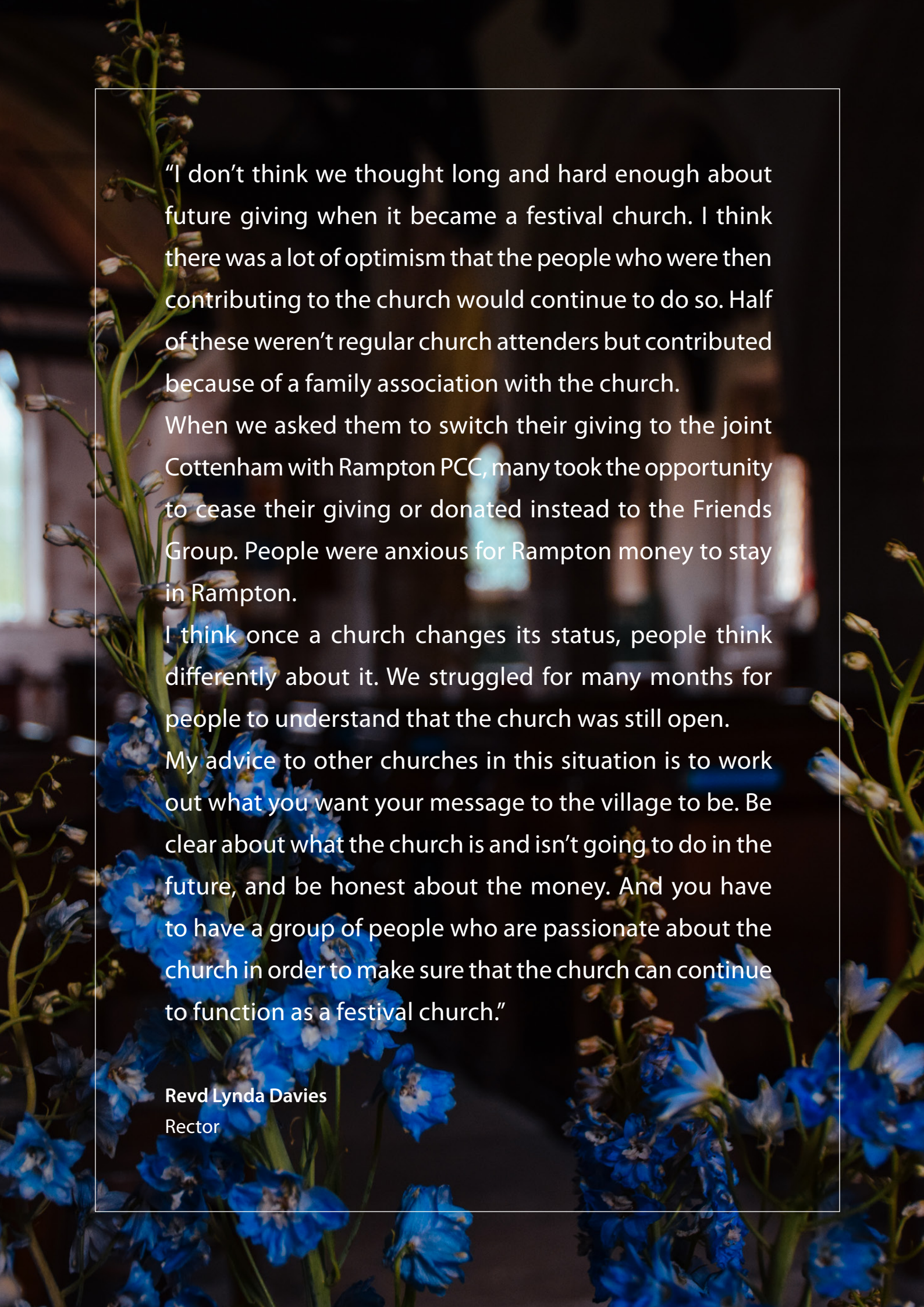
### Church building condition

The heating is inadequate to heat the church, particularly in the winter months when the building is very cold. There are a number of areas requiring maintenance, including gaps in the roof timbers, repairs to stonework and repointing. The thatched roof was repaired approximately 10 years ago. The restoration of the south aisle window is currently the biggest project and is likely to cost in the region of £40,000. This includes repairs to the masonry surrounds and a new leaded window.

### Income generation

Parish giving has fallen since the church became a Festival Church, with some parishioners cancelling their long-term standing orders during the changeover. The church had been over-optimistic about the willingness of the community to continue to contribute when services were drastically reduced. There is a current shortfall of around £3,500, which is being met by Cottenham church, however this will not be sustainable in the longer-term as Cottenham only just manages to break even. It may be necessary to draw on the trust funds currently earmarked for repairs and maintenance, putting the long-term viability of the church at risk.





"I don't think we thought long and hard enough about future giving when it became a festival church. I think there was a lot of optimism that the people who were then contributing to the church would continue to do so. Half of these weren't regular church attenders but contributed because of a family association with the church.

When we asked them to switch their giving to the joint Cottenham with Rampton PCC, many took the opportunity to cease their giving or donated instead to the Friends Group. People were anxious for Rampton money to stay in Rampton.

I think once a church changes its status, people think differently about it. We struggled for many months for people to understand that the church was still open.

My advice to other churches in this situation is to work out what you want your message to the village to be. Be clear about what the church is and isn't going to do in the future, and be honest about the money. And you have to have a group of people who are passionate about the church in order to make sure that the church can continue to function as a festival church."

**Revd Lynda Davies**  
Rector

**Lack of scope for rentals**

There is little scope for renting out the church building, given that it is very cold and lacks WC and kitchen facilities. The village already has a village hall and a public house, which more than adequately serve the small community.

**Asset management**

The medieval building is in need of some major repairs and renovations, including to the rare wall paintings, the windows, the roof and the stonework. Essential repairs are taking priority over additions that would allow the church to be more widely used (e.g. kitchen, WCs) at the present time. The Friends group have raised £25,000 towards the renovation of the south aisle window, which will cost around £40,000 in total. Although grants may be obtained towards this work, these typically require match funding of around 50%. The renovations can take a long time to implement once the work has been specified, bids have been obtained and permission granted.

**Community perceptions of the church**

There are quite a few misconceptions in the community about the way in which local churches are funded, i.e. believing it to be centrally by the Church of England rather than locally. There are also historically concerns about how the church has spent its money in the past, e.g. some saw the money spent on the new path as too costly (£16,000) and a waste of funds. Others believe the change in status – from parish to festival church – means that the church is closed.

**Small and senior congregation**

The few worshippers are now quite elderly and some feel quite strongly about the loss of Rampton as a parish church. This may have led to some cancelling their regular giving to the church. The ageing congregation means that there are fewer volunteers to run the church and to welcome new worshippers. There is no succession plan, in terms of younger worshippers who are able to take over some of the burden. This threatens the long-term viability of the church.

**Theft**

The church has suffered from instances of theft when artefacts have been removed from the church.

## Lessons Learned

---

### **To unite the congregations in both Rampton and Cottenham churches**

The Rector encourages the congregations to view themselves as one church with two buildings. Cottenham church members do support the special services at Rampton and the church wardens are beginning to take on more responsibility for the running of the building. However, the ongoing funding shortfall at Rampton will be an issue for those contributing to Cottenham church.

### **To apply transferable skills in church management**

Members of the Rampton Action Group are proactive in driving forward the necessary improvements and work hand in hand with the Friends group to raise funds. This group cares deeply about the church either as church members or because they are part of the village.

### **To maintain and strengthen the connection with the worshipping community**

Prior to becoming a Festival Church, the congregation was down to single figures only. Whilst in 2018, numbers at Harvest Festival, the Carol Service and Christmas Eve were low, they picked up considerably in 2019. Numbers at the Carol Service rose from 35 to 54 (a 54% increase) and at the Midnight Communion on Christmas Eve from 28 to 41 (a 41% increase). A Choral Evensong in the spring attracted 45 participants, and was supported by members of All Saints Cottenham. Whilst it is taken time, Rampton parishioners appear thankful for the services taking place in the village and are much keener to support them than before.

### **To integrate the church and the community**

The community in Rampton is keen for the church to remain open, as demonstrated by the turnout at the Archdeacon's meeting. The community values the history and the architecture of the building even if they do not necessarily always want to come to services. The Rector ensures that she is visible and attends many activities in the village.

### **To allow sufficient time for new initiatives to be introduced**

There has been criticism in the past of the cost and the amount of time it takes to complete work on the church, and the Rector actively communicates the difficulties of obtaining funding and the long processes involved in seeking approval. Repairs can take a very long time to implement, as plans and bids must be submitted to the Diocesan Advisory Committee and receive formal approval.

### **To be realistic about the challenges involved in making major change**

The church realises it needs to think more carefully about the impact of major change on the financial viability of All Saints. The change in status has impacted the church's ability to be self-sustaining and quite a number of people in the village believe the church is closed. Better communication about change is essential.



“My greatest worry for this church is that currently there are about five or six people, who were the original congregation when it ceased to be a parish church, who will get the church ready for services, are there on the door when there are events, support the church financially. Whilst it is encouraging to see greater attendance at services, without substantial financial security I worry about how long it can be maintained as a festival church.”

**Revd Lynda Davies**  
Rector

**REACH Ely: Reimagining Churches as  
Community Assets for the Common Good**

**Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation**

Cambridge Judge Business School  
University of Cambridge  
Trumpington Street  
Cambridge CB2 1AG  
socialinnovation@jbs.cam.ac.uk  
www.jbs.cam.ac.uk

**Diocese of Ely**

Ely Diocesan Office  
Bishop Woodford House  
Barton Road  
Ely CB7 4DX  
T: +44 (0) 1353 652701  
www.elydiocese.org

[www.reachely.org](http://www.reachely.org)