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**PRESS RELEASE**

**4TH May 2021**

**What do *you* find through church?**

**The Church of England in Suffolk reaches beyond its congregation to welcome back residents**

As we inch out of lockdown, the Church of England in Suffolk is offering residents the chance to find out more about the diverse range of community services it provides.

The campaign will tell its story through the eyes of four different residents, starting with Maxine and Rene.

Maxine is a volunteer with the Lightwave Christian community. She was looking for a new challenge and it offered her a chance to work in rural villages helping people across the generations in her local community.

During the pandemic, Maxine has helped to deliver food packs and internet training to people who found their normal shops closed and were ill-equipped to take up online shopping. The project gave her a renewed sense of purpose and an introduction to the Church of England.

“After enjoying a course to explore on spirituality, I took communion last Christmas Eve in my local church – for the first time in my life I felt completely at home in a church,” said Maxine.

“Practising my faith gives me a sense of fulfilment. I feel less anxious and it helps put things into perspective.”

Rene is a director at The Observatory, an award-winning independent brand of community-focused opticians, with eight practices across East Anglia and one in North London. Originally from Holland, as a teenager Rene rebelled against his upbringing and the teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church. He rediscovered church in his 30s where his parish priest became a confidante and advisor, helping him find spiritual nourishment as his career grew.

“For me, the rhythm of the church service brings comfort and a much-needed moment of peace in my week,” said Rene. “Getting involved with St Michaels Church has given me the chance to feel part of the wider community in Beccles.”

The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison, Bishop of Dunwich said: “We are looking to create awareness and engagement with the work we do as Christian communities as we emerge from the pandemic, especially where such awareness may be lacking in the wider community. Maxine and Rene have had different experiences through engagement with Church but both their experiences are positive, peaceful and fulfilling. We hope that their stories resonate with others in our community and perhaps even stimulate new or fresh engagement with local Christian communities.”

To find out more about the services that Maxine and Rene access through the Church of England in Suffolk and to find a church near you visit [www.cofesuffolk.org](http://www.cofesuffolk.org).

**For more information, please contact Lena O’Shea at Spring.**

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