

Our regular round up of news and forthcoming events from our diocese

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Thursday 14 December 2023



Soldiers from Suffolk village recognised for their part in two World Wars



A new Suffolk war memorial tablet has been dedicated to remember those who came home from two World Wars – but later died from their wounds. Sam Lanier, an historian and author from Holbrook, near Ipswich, thought it was unjust that they had not been officially recognised for their sacrifice.

Bishop Martin Seeley dedicated and blessed the war memorial tablet on 10 December next to All Saints' Church, Holbrook. Afterwards he said, *'Our war memorials traditionally honour those who gave the greatest sacrifice, losing their lives in conflict. However, we should equally remember and be forever grateful to those who came home suffering from war wounds from which they later died. I am delighted that in Holbrook this has been recognised with the dedication of the war memorial tablet and I thank everyone, particularly Sam Lanier, for their hard work and research in bringing this invaluable project to fruition.'* To read the full story, please [click here](#).

Combining recycling and family support



Earlier in the year Blyth Valley Churches held a successful Climate Action Conference and this Christmas the church organised a new event in the run-up to Christmas: a toy and clothing exchange to coincide with the annual Christmas Tree Festival. Local people were generous in their donations of pre-loved toys and clothes, many of which found new homes in the run up to Christmas. The local town council helped to publicise

and supported the event. The event included representatives from the local council and other organisations offering advice on keeping warm and saving energy. One mum commented on social media: *"Amazing! We really enjoyed visiting the church for the toy exchange today. Everyone was so welcoming."*

If you would like to hold a similar event, please email the Revd [Alison Alder](#), associate priest in Blyth Valley Churches, to discuss practicalities.

What is a SIAMS report?



The Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) is the Church of England and Methodist Church's outworking of the requirements of section 48 of the Education Act 2005. SIAMS explores ways in which each school's theologically-rooted Christian vision drives its work and enables the school to live up to its foundation as a Church school. SIAMS inspections focus on the impact of the Church school's Christian vision on pupils and adults. All of our 87 church schools are subject to the SIAMS process and we are delighted that Brampton Church of England Primary School has been praised for its aspiration and inclusion, and for developing confidence and independence in pupils.

Vicky Allen, Executive Headteacher, said: *"I am delighted inspectors recognised the wonderful environment we have created at the school. We ensure all our pupils' individual needs are met, therefore giving them the opportunities to grow within themselves and their education. At Brampton, we aim to nurture our school family and empower us to develop and grow our God-given talents and reach our full potential."* Read the full story [here](#).

A message from Dave Gardner, Retiring Director of Mission & Ministry



Dear Friends

I just want to thank you for the many messages and cards of appreciation of my ministry during my time as Director of Mission & Ministry. Prior to this role I was privileged to serve as Incumbent in two Benefices firstly as part of the Mildenhall Team and then St John's Woodbridge & St Andrew's Bredfield. My last working day is tomorrow as I retire from this role and paid ministry after 32 years service in the Diocese.

It has been an amazing last eleven years in this central role. During this time we have seen our continued engagement in God's mission in this lovely county deepen and develop through some choppy waters. The Growing in God vision and strategy builds on many centuries of faithful witness to God's love for each person in our varied contexts and for young and old alike. I have been constantly encouraged by the many stories of faith from across the Diocese in both parish church settings and new experimental mission activities.

I have shared this experience with some amazing colleagues based here at the St Nicholas Centre who continue to serve ministry in all its forms in church, school and chaplaincy. I have enjoyed working alongside fantastic clergy, lay ministers, lay officers and congregation members. It has been a privilege to have been able to influence in some small measure the discerning of where God is already at work with our Bishop's Staff Team. My prayers will be with The Revd Canon Sharron Coburn as she transitions into this role in March. I could not wish for a better person to undertake this role.

Finally I want to thank my team and volunteers who are part of the Mission and Ministry Team. They have been an inspiration to work alongside and I will miss them enormously.

All of this would not have been possible without Karen my wife and soulmate for life. She has been releasing and supportive in equal measure and I look forward to an enjoyable retirement with her and discovering what God has in store for us.

We are remaining in Ipswich so I look forward to seeing many of you and continuing to hear of your witness to God's love through Jesus Christ.

With every blessing
Dave

Advent and Christmas Events

Follow the Star: Join the Song



A recording of the new Follow the Star carol has been released on all digital platforms including Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music and YouTube. It is performed by St Martin's Voices, with organ and brass quintet. The Follow the Star song is a new version of the time-honoured text, *The First Nowell*, which has been written by renowned composer and former King's Singer, Bob Chilcott. More than 3,000 people have signed up to sing the carol so far so the song will be performed by choirs up and down the country as part of carol services and concerts for Christmas and Advent. Find out more [here](#).

The latest Digital Giving Newsletter has the latest 'Join the Song' backgrounds for devices and online giving. Find it [here](#) and if you need any help or have queries contact emma.denton@cofesuffolk.org

Broadcast Christmas Services: St Mary le Tower has been chosen as the Church of England's official Midnight Mass Service this year. The service was recorded on a late November afternoon and led by the Revd Tom Mumford. Choristers and full choir were also singing. On New Year's Day, Tom will also feature on 'Beyond Belief' on BBC Radio 4, talking about the impact of music on coming to faith.

World Music Premieres: The choirs at St Edmundsbury Cathedral will be giving two world premieres of new music, composed specifically for them, over the Advent and Christmas period. On Sunday 17 December at 3.30pm, the Cathedral Youth Choir will give the first performance of Mark Blatchly's new set of canticles, the Tenth Service. On Saturday 23 December at 7.00pm, at the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, the Cathedral Choir will sing Epiphany Star by Ghislaine Reece-Trapp, a setting of words by former Dean of St Edmundsbury, The Very Revd James Atwell. Find out more [here](#).

Stowmarket Christmas Tree Festival is in full swing: In its 19th year, the Christmas Tree Festival is open from Tuesday to Saturday 9.00am - 3.00pm until Saturday

23 December for visitors to see over 300 trees so creatively decorated by local groups and organisations. You can also enjoy home-baked refreshments and lunches in the Osier Café as well as join various special Carol Services and Concerts.

Drawing near to God – Advent course with Bishop Mike

Recordings of the first two sessions of this Zoom course are available [here](#). If you would like to join Bishop Mike for the next two sessions, they take place tonight, Thursday 14 December, and on Tuesday 19 December. The sessions will all be recorded and available from the website.



Suffolk Carols: A joint initiative from Suffolk Sounds Radio and Lightwave to promote carol singing in all sorts of venues, strengthen community and raise funds for local charities. Any community carol-singing event between 4 and 24 December can join in. Please visit 'Suffolk Carols' [here](#), and register your event and the charity you are raising funds for and this will be advertised on Suffolk Sounds radio programmes and via the Suffolk Carols Facebook page.

Inspiring Angels: Get creative and join our Christmas campaign. Angels are a symbol of love, of presence, pointing the way to the moment it all changed, when God came in the person of Jesus to be with us in the world, to share in love and pain alongside us. All the resources for this campaign are available on our website [here](#).

Depden - The Living Nativity! Taking place at 5.30pm and 7.45pm on 14, 15 and 16 December. Step into the shoes of Mary and Joseph as you join them on their journey to Bethlehem. Along the way, you'll encounter friendly farm animals, humble shepherds, and radiant angels, each playing their part in this mesmerising tale. To purchase your tickets, please [click here](#).

Christmas Changes Everything: The Combined Churches' Choir, Stowmarket has been thoroughly enjoying learning an exciting new Christmas musical. *Christmas Changes Everything*. It's a joyful Christmas celebration packed full of seasonal favourites as well as brand new Christmas songs. The choir would very much like you to share the performance at 7.00pm on Saturday 16 December 2023 at St Peter's and St Mary's Parish Church, Stowmarket. Admission is free with a retiring collection for the wonderful East Anglian Children's Hospice (EACH).

Marking 800th anniversary of the first crib scene: for a contemporary interpretation of the traditional Christmas Crib scene have a look in the churchyard of St Margaret's Church, Ipswich which will remain on display from Sunday 17 January 2023 to Sunday 7 January 2024.

Christmas Tree Festival: Come along and celebrate with St Mary's Church, Stratford St Mary, 16 - 17 December for their Christmas Tree festival. From 10.30am - 4.00pm, £2 entry and children go free, with music and refreshments available. The festival will finish on Sunday with Carols by Candlelight at 4.00pm. Also happening is a festive preview

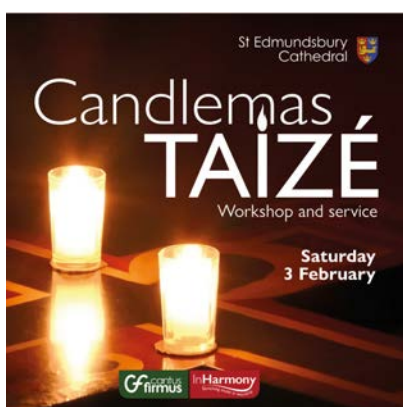
evening on 15 December, at 7.30pm with drinks, canapés and a special performance from the Constable Singers. Booking is essential for the preview evening, please email harrietannaruth@gmail.com to book.

Christmas Carol Service: Come along to St Mary the Virgin, Thorpe Morieux, for their Christmas Carol Service on 31 December at 4.00pm. The service has been running for a few years and has a focus on refugees and aid work. Also present will be the Tudor Rose choir, led by Kevin Slingsby, and refreshments will be available afterwards.

Candlemas Taizé workshop and service

Saturday 3 February

St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1LS



The worship of the Taizé community in France has become renowned across the world for its simplicity, stillness and sense of timelessness. With its blend of simple melody and harmony, prayer and times of silence, combined with the use of candles, Taizé worship provides a valuable opportunity to engage with God. The service at 4.30 pm will be preceded by an optional workshop at 2.00 pm, designed to help those who plan and lead Taizé services, or are wanting to find out more about how Taizé worship works. Workshop tickets cost £6 and can be booked at

cantusfirmus.org.uk. Admission to the service is free.

Events

Deanery Drop-In Sessions



Join various teams from the Diocesan office who are offering their advice on Children's and Families' Ministry, Youth Ministry, Giving, Grants, Discipleship, Communications and Vocations – a real opportunity to have conversations and help people. Our next Drop In Sessions are on:

Zoom | Tuesday 23 January | 3.00pm to 5.00pm book [here](#) or 6.00pm – 8.00pm book [here](#)

Thomas Clarkson Centre, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3JT | Tuesday 6 February | 3.00pm to 5.00pm book

[here](#) or 6.00pm – 8.00pm book [here](#)

St Augustine's Community Hub, Ipswich IP3 8TH | Monday 13 May | 3.00pm to 5.00pm book [here](#) or 6.00pm - 8.00pm book [here](#).

Enhancing Pastoral Ministry

Wednesdays starting 10 January 2024, 7.30pm

Earl Stonham Village Hall, Forward Green IP14 5HJ

Enhancing Pastoral Ministry is a six-session course for people who are involved in pastoral care (e.g. Readers, Lay Elders, clergy, pastoral visitors) as well as those interested in a deeper understanding of this ministry. The course is open to all and free of charge. To book and for more information, [please click here.](#)

So What About the Old Testament?

Wednesdays starting 24 January 2024, refreshments from 7.00pm, sessions 7.30 - 9.30pm
Earl Stonham Village Hall, Forward Green IP14 5HJ

In this short course, Hugh Williamson will try to open our eyes to the different types of material in the Old Testament, with an eye on how we can apply it in our own times in both church and society. The course is open to all and is free of charge. For course dates, more information and to book please click [here.](#)

Lay Elder training and social morning

Saturday 3 February 2024, 9:30 AM
Salvation Army Hall, Stowmarket IP14 1NE

This Lay Elders event was postponed as a result of the storms in October - we are delighted that we have been able to set a new date with the same guest speakers. The Ven Rich Henderson, Archdeacon of Suffolk, will give a keynote address, and bookings are being taken for either pastoral or liturgical workshops led by Karen Gardner and the Revd Canon Sharon Potter. After the morning's training we will share some social time while we eat our lunches - cake will be provided! For more details and to register for your free place, please [click here.](#)

In the beginning was the story... Approaching the New Testament

Starts 1 May 2024 7.00pm to 9.30pm
Earl Stonham Village Hall, Forward Green IP14 5HJ

This course looks at the beginnings of what became Christianity in the writings of the New Testament, and explores their narrative features. The course is open to all and free of charge. Please book early [here.](#)

Gather: The Big Weekend 2024

Friday 12 April 2024 6.00pm to Sunday 14 April 4.00pm
Sizewell Hall, Leiston IP16 4TX



A weekend of craziness, worship, games and friendship all focused around learning more about living as a Christian in the C21st. The Big Weekend is organised by the Church of England in St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, and run by experienced youth workers from around Suffolk. Offering young people from school years 7-13 the chance to explore

faith and have fun! To book, please [click here.](#)

Notices

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Statistics for Mission Returns: If you have not already done so, we encourage you to complete your Statistics for Mission via the National Church's Online Parish Returns Portal. The portal may be accessed [here](#) and the deadline is 31 January 2024. The Statistics for Mission team recently held two webinars on using the portal and the videos of the webinars are available to watch [here via YouTube](#). A letter and timetable and resources for the Parish Return are on our website [here](#).

Parish Visits from the Dean of St Edmundsbury: The Dean's 2024 diary is now open for Parish Visit requests. Dean Joe would very much like to preach and/or preside at churches across the Diocese, particularly those he has not yet had the pleasure of visiting. The Dean also welcomes the opportunity to attend Deanery Chapter when his schedule allows. For further information or to request a visit, please contact his PA Erin at deanspa@stedscathedral.org or 01284 748722.

Vacancies

[Finance and Operations Director](#) | Diocesan Office | Closing date: 29 December
[House for Duty Priest](#) | Lakenheath with Santon Downham and Elveden | Closing date: 5 January
Administrator | St Margaret's Church | Closing date: 5 January - to apply, email hr.stmagsipswich@gmail.com
[Team Vicar](#) | The Forest Heath Team Benefice | Closing date: 2 February
[Rector](#) | Walton and Trimley | Closing date: 11 February
[Director of Music](#) | Woodbridge
[Priest in Charge and Archdeaconry Mission Enabler](#) | Sproughton with Burstall, Copdock with Washbrook and Belstead
[Rector](#) | Beccles
River Church, Ipswich are recruiting various posts - all details at: riverchurchipswich.org/vacancies

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