

Mission focused
Priest-in-Charge
Four Rivers Benefice

Bedfield, Brundish, Cratfield, Laxfield, Monk Soham,
Tannington, Wilby and Worlingworth with Southolt

Benefice Profile



Hartismere and Hoxne Deanery
Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Thank you for being interested in the position of a full-time priest-in-charge for the **Four Rivers Benefice**. This is an exciting time for us as we look forward to a new phase in the mission and ministry of the benefice, with the opportunity to work together more effectively in conjunction with **Lightwave** to bring God's love to our communities. We do not underestimate the challenges of rural ministry but we are eager to grow and are optimistic that this could be a significant new direction for us.

We are looking for a priest who will work with, and alongside, the existing congregations and ministry team to continue to hold services across the benefice and to explore new avenues of mission and outreach.

We encourage applications from all who are suitably qualified and who feel a strong sense of God's calling to minister here in our eight parishes in the heart of rural Suffolk.

Our partnership with Lightwave

This appointment brings with it the exciting opportunity to work in conjunction with Lightwave (Suffolk's Fresh Expressions movement) to bring the Good News to people in our communities, particularly those who at present may have no connection with Christianity or church. Also to build fresh expressions of church, in conjunction with those parishes wanting to take part, for those - particularly younger generations - who do not feel comfortable with our current styles of worship, either within or outside of our church buildings.

For the first three years, the post will be part-funded (£10,000 per annum) by strategic development funding. This brings with it a specific focus on making and growing new disciples and a special relationship with the Lightwave Community. During this time the benefice will need to increase their giving to cover this amount once the three-year period is over.

Five of our PCCs are committed to working actively with Lightwave and have identified local opportunities and synergies especially through local schools. Three PCCs, Brundish, Cratfield and Tannington, are smaller rural communities without schools. Whilst they do not see Lightwave fitting in with their current mission practice, they remain supportive of Lightwave's work across the benefice and look forward to working with the new priest-in-charge in their new role.

We would expect the priest-in-charge to spend at least one day a week specifically on this work, building Lightwave groups (mission teams) and engaging in outreach in the villages of the benefice.

Index

What is important to us?	3
What is our vision?	3
What are the challenges?	3
What sort of person are we looking for?	3
What can we offer?	4
Our worship style	4
Where are we?	5
Our parishes	6
The Vicarage	14
Lightwave	15
Hartismere and Hoxne Deanery	16
Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich	17
Appendix 1 – Services	19

What is important to us?

- That the love of God is central to all we believe and do
- That we are the people of God in our communities - involved, caring and supporting
- That our church family continues to grow in their faith and knowledge of God's love
- That the people in our communities, many of which are growing as new houses are being built, can see God in what we do and are able to come into a loving relationship with him
- That everyone feels welcome in our churches and church family
- That the church (both people and buildings) is accessible to everyone when they need it. Our churches have an open-door policy with some of the buildings open 24/7 for visitors or anyone wanting to spend time in God's house

What is our vision?

- To explore new ways of bringing people closer to God, e.g. outdoor worship, Forest Church
- To see more families and children coming to faith. We are currently exploring the possibility of setting up a Lightwave group specifically focussed on families and would like to strengthen our links with our local schools
- To develop the ways we take the love of God out to our communities
- To see our church family encouraged in their faith, grow spiritually and in number
- To be better at working together as a team, sharing the resources and gifts that we have to further God's work across the benefice

What are the challenges?

- Working together as a benefice across eight very different parishes that are geographically spread out
- Our small, predominately ageing, congregations
- The struggle to raise the funds to pay our parish share, maintain our buildings and support mission and ministry in our communities
- How to better engage with people who may see the churches as beautiful historic buildings, rather than as a community of people of faith
- The buildings, all of which are old and beautiful with significant historic interest, but which are complex to maintain

What sort of person are we looking for?

- A pray-er - someone with prayer at the heart of their ministry
- An encourager and trainer - guiding and enabling lay and clergy ministry in the churches and communities
- A leader and team player with a heart for, and experience of, mission. Someone with the commitment and ability to help us take the love of God to our communities and who will help churches to grow in depth, in number, younger and in making a difference

- A pastor - able to listen and easy to talk to, and who would be active and visible in our communities
- A teacher - able to preach the word of God clearly to a modern world
- A person who is attracted to, and has an appreciation of, rural ministry and life

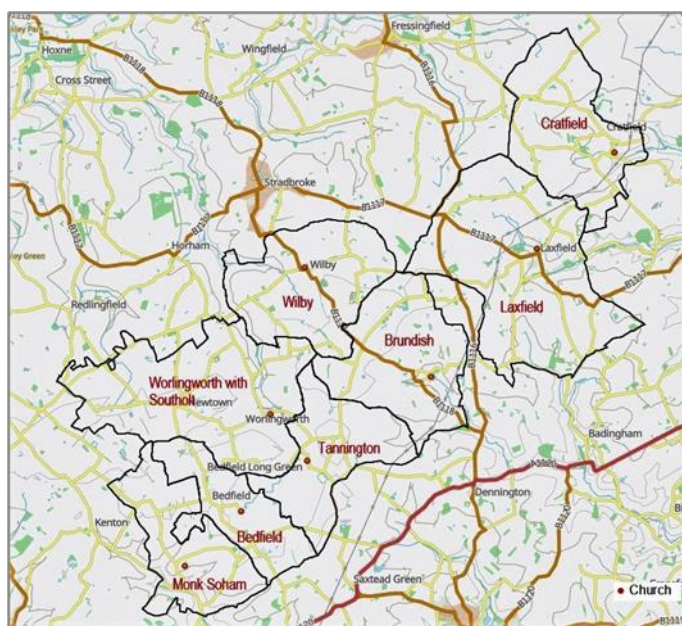
What can we offer?

- A core of lay people and clergy who are active in the mission and ministry of their churches and who are keen to see the growth of mission in the benefice
- A Lightwave support group working across the benefice and the support of the wider Lightwave community in Suffolk
- A supportive ministry team of four self-supporting ministers (SSMs) and seven lay elders
- A part-time administrator
- A modern vicarage with an office annex

Our worship style

We have a range of worship styles from 1662 Prayer Book through Common Worship Morning and Evening Prayer and Holy Communion, Celtic and informal services. Details of our normal service pattern are given in Appendix 1. In addition to the services in church on a Sunday, we offer a benefice-wide online service of Celtic Morning and Evening Prayer during the week as well as occasional online discussion groups. Currently we use largely traditional hymns, but with some more modern worship songs in some churches. None of the churches has a regular choir, though there are several choirs in the benefice which take part in special services.

Where are we?



The benefice was created in 2013 and takes its name from the four rivers which are fed by the streams which rise within its boundary - the Blyth, Alde, Deben and Waveney - and is in an area of predominately arable farming. The parishes vary in size, ranging in population from as small as 80 to almost 1,000 of all ages. There is some new housing being built, particularly in Laxfield which is the largest of the villages. Although the villages are surrounded by farmland, the actual role of farming as a major employer has diminished, and its place has been taken by other local businesses such as building and construction, and various small enterprises. Music and the arts are well represented in the villages, the wide Suffolk skies being an inspiration for artists of all kinds and the Aldeburgh Foundation at Snape and Latitude Festival are right on our doorstep. Living in our villages offers easy access to the countryside for recreation with a good network of footpaths and it is only a 30 minute drive to the beautiful Suffolk coast and its acclaimed wildlife, with RSPB Minsmere, the Broads and the Heritage Coast all within easy reach. However, a car is essential as there is very limited public transport, although Diss offers a good train service to Norwich and London.

All of the churches are listed historic buildings; some are at the heart of the villages they serve and some are on the outskirts. There are no church halls, but most of the villages have a village hall or community centre. More information on the history of our churches can be found on <http://www.suffolkchurches.co.uk>

There are four Church of England primary schools within the benefice, all of which have links with their parish churches. The nearest secondary schools are just outside the benefice with bus services for students.

Laxfield is currently the only village in the benefice with a shop and pub (actually two pubs). The nearby towns of Framlingham and Halesworth both have supermarkets and other shops.

A number of parish magazines circulate within the villages containing news from both the church and the community. Online, most villages have websites with information about the church and there is further information on A Church Near You. We share news and prayers on social media and a benefice news sheet is circulated to all the churches and emailed to those who subscribe.

Our Parishes

Laxfield - All Saints

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2288>

<http://www.laxfield.online>

Our aim is to be a 'church without walls' - to take the love of God out into the village and surrounding area that the church serves. We strive for inclusiveness in our worship style. Celtic Worship and Fourth Sunday, both lay led, have been introduced in the last year, and we have an annual Animal Service in the churchyard.

A quiet space for prayer is used regularly. The church has a bronze Eco Church award, is a Fair Trade Church and is a collection point for the local foodbank.

All Saints Church building stands at the heart of the village in a conservation area, and its magnificent fifteenth century tower is visible for miles around. Laxfield with its population of around 1000, and increasing, is a thriving, friendly and diverse place with clubs and teams to suit almost everyone!



Links with the primary school and preschool are greatly valued and we welcome children, staff and families for a special church service or activity at least once a term. We also visit and lead assemblies, and a vision is to grow these relationships to help to make our congregation younger.

Meet Up Friday, started since Covid restrictions were eased, offers cake and friendship once a month in the pub next to the church to a good number of people. Another vision is to develop the missional opportunities of this successful event.

The large size of the church lends itself to big occasions - around 400 at pre-Covid Christmas Eve carol services. Always mindful that the church building needs to be useful to the community to be valued by it, we have installed a kitchen and toilet and upgraded the lighting.

We are blessed by a large 'extended' church family of fundraisers, flower arrangers and cleaners. Our fundraising is mostly based in and around the church - summer concerts, suppers, breakfasts, and delicious teas, all served from the tower kitchen. During the monthly community markets, the church serves refreshments and hosts stalls along the wide aisle. We would like to improve the socialising area by reordering part of the back of the church.

It is evident that many people see the building as a place that they can enter and feel comfortable in - we would love them to experience more of the love of God. We are an enthusiastic and energetic team, and this is a rewarding community. We will welcome, support, and pray with a priest-in-charge who could embrace all of this, and who is OK with bats and draughts!

There is more about the church, what we get up to and pictures on our A Church Near You site.



Worlingworth - St Mary (and Southolt - St Margaret)

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2352>

<http://worlingworth.onesuffolk.net>

The parish of Worlingworth cum Southolt has a population approaching 900. There are four main neighbourhoods with green space and farming in between, but this does not impede a wide range of social activities run by community organisations and the church. In 2013, the village won 'Suffolk's most active small village' title and continues to be a very social village. The church community is deeply involved with many of the village clubs, councils and groups, so a connection already exists for the new priest-in-charge to be introduced and to build even further on integrated fellowship. St Mary's Ladies Guild was formed to support the church with fund-raising, brass cleaning and providing



the altar flowers. The Guild is at the heart of organising events when the church becomes a focal point of community activity.



We would like to extend our ministry and mission into the village pub, which should soon re-open after many years of closure! An annexed 'farm shop' would be in this very central location as well. We look forward to blessing the re-opening, and excitement is already building for what would be a further hub where local and casual visitors can meet. One of our SSMs would like to be involved with Lightwave and open a men's group. Perhaps a suitable venue for a Lightwave initiative!

An exciting opportunity to visit our CEVC primary school on a regular basis is open to the new priest-in-charge, where good links already exist with foundation governors involved. It has a Christian ethos, is rated as outstanding and has 62 pupils and a nursery pre-school. More details on the school website

<https://www.worlingworthschool.co.uk>

At St Mary's, we have a core of about 25 regulars who support and attend worship at the church. Our ethos is outward-looking in witness and mission and we hold a number of special services to encourage wider interest. Some are already held in the Community Centre. Some of our members look forward to offering support to the new priest-in-charge as he/she engages in the Lightwave ministry with Fresh Expressions of church. Others would need to be respected as they prefer to continue in their traditional way of churchmanship comprising BCP, Common Worship and services of the word.

St Mary's is a beautiful medieval church. The churchyard is open for burial, well maintained and has won an award from Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

St Margaret's, Southolt, which served the parish as a chapel of ease, is now closed for regular worship but continues to hold up to five seasonal services a year by Bishop's licence. It is administered by a local voluntary trust which comprises mostly Southolt residents.



Paying parish share has been very challenging and it is a huge share for our rural community, but we will try our best to pay a fair percentage of our benefice share.

We look forward to the opportunity to serve with the new minister called by God to our Four Rivers Benefice.

Bedfield - St Nicholas

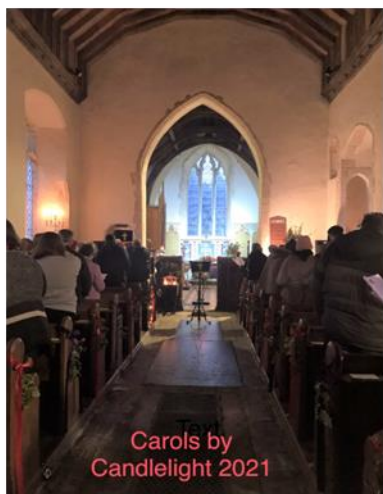
<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2295>

<http://bedfield.onesuffolk.net>

St Nicholas is a medieval church over 900 years old which has undergone extensive restoration work over the last 20 years.

There are usually three Sunday services each month with additional services during Lent and Easter starting with Ash Wednesday. Lammas, Rogation, Harvest, Advent carols by candlelight and our patronal festival, together with a pet service, are just some of the services offered during the year. Our congregation varies from eight to ten for normal services to 65 for many of the special celebrations.

Various fundraising events and donations helped us to pay our parish share in full last year. The newly formed group, Friends of St Nicholas, will liaise with the PCC on caring for the fabric and funding capital projects for the church with the additional aim of encouraging village participation and use of the church.



Our planned events to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee involved the whole village and reached out to the wider community.

Bedfield is a rural village with a population of 300+. Over the last two years or so we have had several young families move here. This has benefited our church primary school which has just joined the Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust. We are working in partnership with the school to explore how the church and churchyard might become an extended classroom. The development of this project is at an early stage with one of the Benefice SSMs recently appointed as a governor at the school. This, we believe, will help us to develop our mission further.

We have discovered a wonderful sense of community throughout the various lockdowns and have all worked to support each other. We have an enthusiasm for mission and for greater collaboration within the Four Rivers Benefice and have just set up a benefice WhatsApp group which has already given us a sense of unity.



Cratfield - St Mary

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2249>

<http://cratfield.onesuffolk.net>

Cratfield lies at the most easterly extreme of the benefice, with about 300 people spread across four sub communities or Greens. The most populous, Bell Green, forms the hub of the village and includes the village hall, playing field and church.

The village organises a popular pop-up pub and restaurant once a month at the village hall. There are dog shows, craft fairs, popular and classical music concerts, fundraisers, supper nights, open mic music nights, a regular mid-summer madness open air music event, photographic competitions, village walks and more. The church in Cratfield has a core of around 20 people and we usually have a congregation of 10 - 14 people at our regular services. For festivals and such-like, we would plan on welcoming 60 or more people.



We have a low church tradition and maintain three monthly services. Evening Prayer and Holy Communion are framed around BCP - our regular congregation enjoys the familiarity and poetry of traditional words, but that is not to say we are stuck in the mud.

Village Worship is less formal and in recent years our festival services, including outdoor worship, have been more contemporary and have been well attended. Within our congregation, we are blessed with people who bring a variety of

complementary gifts. Our lay elder has a gift for pastoral work which is recognised in the wider village community. Expertise from within the congregation has helped us maintain our ancient but light and airy building and we have undertaken improvements including developing modern toilet and kitchen facilities.

The churchyard is well maintained with the help of volunteers from the wider community.

All this means we have the resources to be creative in the ways we engage with our community. In the warmer months, we have hosted a soup group for the older members of the community in the church. Last autumn, we held a local history weekend and this summer sees an encore for the Swing Band concert that saw people literally dancing in the aisles. We have instituted a regular programme of village walks, about four times a year, which draw in 10 - 20 people, many of whom do not attend regular services.

Probably our most notable event over the last year was our Walking Nativity. So many people, including our young people, got involved in building scenery and creating costumes and props and this culminated in a spectacular procession through the village. The three giant wise men were quite the talking point.



Overall, we are growing in confidence in how we can minister to our community and we hope that you will be able to support us in this. We look forward to giving you a warm welcome - but bring your thermals for the winter months!

Wilby - St Mary

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2292>

<https://wilby.suffolk.cloud>

Our focus in Wilby is to be a visible example of the presence and love of God within our church family and wider community.

We have a high achieving Church of England voluntary controlled primary school and nursery in the village. Whilst there is church participation at assemblies and other events, this is an area we particularly wish to build on and develop.



Outreach via hospitality has been central to the church for many years, but obviously this had to be curtailed due to Covid. We are restarting our monthly drop-in and hope to start other events in the very near future. We are always looking for new ideas to expand our outreach into the wider community, either on a parish or benefice level.

As members of a rural community, we are very aware of the pressures on our environment and are actively investigating how we can become kinder to the world around us through Eco Church, both practically and spiritually.

The church building dedicated to St Mary is set within a beautifully kept churchyard. The tower houses one of the best eight bell peals in the country. The treasures within the church are varied, from flags, medieval pew ends, as well as the vapours of the prayers and worship of generations past, and one of our greatest treasures - the current people who live and worship within and without the building.



Currently, services are held every Sunday (see Appendix 1). Our lay elder regularly leads services of the word and assists with other services as well as pastoral care and leading of online services and study as part of the online worship team. Our church community strives for inclusive worship, with many members of our church family encouraged to utilise and recognise their personal gifts in for example, meeting, greeting and socialising, reading, leading prayer and making music.

During the pandemic members of our congregation joined our online services on Sundays and also the regular online Celtic style services during the week.

Wilby is an attractive small village with a population of just over 200. The Coronation Hall opened in 1955 and was the first permanent village hall built in Suffolk purely by voluntary labour. It hosts an abundance of regular and one-off events. A strong community spirit is maintained with church members playing an active part in many of the village organisations.

Brundish - St Lawrence

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2293>

<https://brundish.suffolk.cloud>

Brundish is situated at the head of the shallow Alde Valley with the River Alde having its source within our parish boundary. There are some 80 or so houses scattered over mainly arable farmland with a population of approximately 170 people.

Brundish has a vibrant village hall which is equipped with audio visual equipment allowing for regular cinema, gardening club and pub nights. Our free, erudite and colourful monthly parish newsletter is distributed to each household in the village and we enjoy a strong community spirit.

The church of St Lawrence is a handsome fourteenth century building with Norman origins situated a little way from the rest of the village with just a farmhouse for company. It enjoys the most wonderful natural light due to its almost complete lack of stained glass and is famed for its acoustic quality. It rings out with its choral works, concerts and organ music and is regularly decked out with flowers.



During the year, several social and fundraising events are held and due to this our church regularly pays - and is proud to pay - its parish share in full. The church is well supported by our non-churchgoing community and by a small army of unsung heroes.



The church building is always open and sees many visitors. It is a most wonderful place for private prayer - either within or without the church. Cyclists are often seen resting on our welcoming bench, embraced by the goodwill of centuries of gentle worship and the bird song of now. Our churchyard is serene and loved and welcoming. Our churchmanship can be described as middle of the road and our services celebrate the wide tastes of our diverse community.

In Brundish, we enjoy each other's company, socially and spiritually. In these difficult times, where better to commune, to connect and to appreciate peace and tranquillity other than in our church and its surroundings? We celebrate our beautiful building, we nurture our wild flowers. There is a serenity here that is difficult to find elsewhere. We value that amongst all else. With our tractors, our horses, our wellies and our dogs, this is as it has been for 900 years.

Call it the Holy Spirit or serendipity, both work for Brundish. We will welcome you with open arms.

Monk Soham - St Peter

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2296>

<http://monksoham.onesuffolk.net>

Monk Soham is a village in a completely rural setting in lovely countryside, teeming with wildlife and a friendly atmosphere. It has a population of approximately 140. This consists of mostly adults who live in mainly privately owned housing. Although there is no primary school in the village, most children attend the CEVC primary school in the adjoining village of Bedfield.



The Church is a 13th century building with walls of mainly flint, partly plastered with slate roofs. Extensive masonry repairs to the tower and major work on the porch were carried out in 2006 with further major work being done to the nave ceiling in 2019. In past years the church wardens have seen to the building requirements, including the application for grants. The unspoiled building has lots of natural light, a seven-sacrament font, a beautiful carved reredos, medieval and Victorian pews, a fine one-manual organ, and a large open churchyard. The church is open 24 hours a day, and in a very peaceful setting with some of the best views in Suffolk to be seen from the large churchyard.

The churchmanship follows a broad/middle church style. At present there are normally four services per month (See Appendix 1). We also have choral services of Compline, Litany, Matins etc. on occasions, which are supported by the Pastoral Quire (a choir that is not attached to any church). For festivals the five bells are rung and the choir also attends some of these services. There is normally a maximum of two weddings, two funerals and one to two baptisms each year, although Covid-19 has had an effect on these over the last two years. Generally, our SSM has taken a majority of the services.



Our main hymn book is Ancient and Modern Standard, but we also use A and M Revised, 100 Hymns for Today, and New Hymns and Worship Songs.

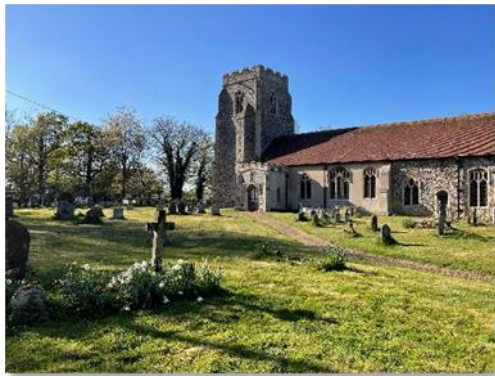
We would look for the new priest-in-charge to be someone who leads a lifestyle demonstrating Christian values and who is good at developing relationships. They should be able to work with different points of view as well as being able to communicate effectively and enthusiastically with people, encouraging them in the faith.

Tannington - St Ethelbert

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2294>

St Ethelbert, Tannington is a beautiful, simple country church which, with a door that remains open 24 hours a day, provides a haven for quiet thought and prayer. Those who visit find an aura of deep peace. Among the many beautiful features of this historic rural church is a recently installed large stained-glass window in memory of Reginald Harvey, a churchwarden for many years and a benefactor.

The peal of six bells can be heard on summer evenings and for special services as we welcome bell ringers to practise, as well as attracting campanologists from near and far.



The village of Tannington has a population of about 80, with houses being scattered among the lanes and fields. Currently, a service is held every alternate month. The newly elected churchwarden is working hard to bring more splendour to this rural village and has so far enjoyed holding seasonal celebrations, Christmas village carol singing, afternoon teas and creative fundraising events. This summer, she intends to create a Pictures in the Park outdoor cinema to fundraise for new church gates and pathway.

With a small church attendance, the churchwarden has taken responsibility for safeguarding, secretarial roles, ground keeping and treasurer! A concerted effort is underway to engage the community and create more of a communal feel to the village.

The Vicarage

The vicarage is a four-bedroom detached house built around the 1970s, close to the centre of Laxfield. The entrance is through a glazed lobby with two doors leading off it -one to the house and one into a large dual aspect study/benefice office, with its own cloakroom. Downstairs there is a dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, cloakroom and south-facing sitting room. Upstairs are four bedrooms, one with an ensuite shower room, and a bathroom. Outside is a garage and large well-stocked garden.





God's Light Shines in Suffolk

The creation of the Lightwave Community with a Bishop's Mission order covering the whole diocese is an important part of diocesan-wide growth in local mission. The name of the community comes from the idea of light waves being the way in which light spreads into dark places. Lightwave is committed to shining the light of Jesus in Suffolk through acts of kindness and practical service as well as worship and witness and has a special heart for small rural places.

Small groups shining Christ's Light

The Lightwave Community is made up of small groups, shining Christ's Light all over Suffolk. Our groups meet in homes, pubs, offices, schools and online. We are simple worshipping communities that work alongside and complement traditional Sunday services. We try to be down to earth and to be the sort of place you can feel at home even if you've never been part of church before.

Each group aims to find its unique way of shining Christ's light in the local community. Lightwave groups can deliver food parcels, visit the isolated, run community choirs, lead after-school clubs, support parents and toddlers, welcome people moving into the neighbourhood, empower teenagers, engage with nature, organise clay-pigeon shooting... you get the idea. We often use the Suffolk Discipleship Pathway as a model for how we help us offer a path to faith. <https://lightwave.community/resources/the-suffolk-discipleship-pathway>

Listening and learning together

In a Lightwave group, everyone has a part to play. It is not just for leaders. Everyone has talents. Everyone has needs. We care and pray and learn and work and have fun together. Lightwave offers priests-in-charge monthly mentoring and will bring free training to your benefice when this is helpful.

Love God. Love People.

Jesus said the greatest command is to Love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and the second is to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. It's simple really. Our ability to love people and ourselves comes from receiving God's love. Springing from this are the 5 value-based practices of Lightwave groups:-

All Involved Becoming Disciples Creating Community Doing Evangelism Encountering God

“God calls the church in each generation to show and share his love in ways both old and new. I believe Lightwave is one of the new ways -rooted in the wisdom of the old -that God is calling us to embrace here in Suffolk.”

Right Revd Martin Seeley, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, pictured with Archdeacon Sally Gaze, Leader of the Lightwave Community

Find out more by watching

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LqUIfy1k8Y>

and visit our website <https://lightwave.community/>



Hartismere and Hoxne Deanery

Working on a strategic mission plan.....

The Deanery of Hartismere and Hoxne was formed by the recent merger of two adjacent deaneries. The deanery now comprises 39 parishes in seven benefices, all very rural apart from the small town of Eye, although there are some larger villages, of which Laxfield is one. The two deaneries had always worked closely together, and in recent years shared a Rural Dean, so the merger was a natural progression.

Deanery meetings are held three times a year, with a focus on invited speakers on a range of relevant subjects. The deanery continues to work together on strategic mission planning, within the overall diocesan plan of Growing in God; particular objectives are the encouragement and release of gifts and vocations, the development of discipleship and spirituality, community engagement and the growth of work with families.

Meanwhile, the deanery is blessed with a good number of SSMs, active priests with PTO and committed lay elders, and we are exploring different ways of working such as having Recognised Local Leaders working in a particular parish; some benefices are exploring clusters – that is two or three churches working together, sharing ministry and officers of the PCC. There is much potential; opportunities to maintain traditional services whilst also developing new ways of worship and service. We are keen to work in partnership with our communities, building trust and relationships between church and community. Our churches are well loved and, as all are open daily, there are frequent visitors. The cure of souls is taken seriously; we know the church needs to feed its members but is also here for the wider community. Baptisms, weddings and funerals (which are well attended) offer missional opportunities in all our benefices. Churches of the deanery meet for some shared services such as Ash Wednesday, Ascension and Lammas.

The Rural Dean convenes monthly chapter meetings for clergy. The chapter is where we support one another, learn from each other and pray together.

Our diocesan vision is 'flourishing congregations making a difference'. We are excited about the next 5 years, believing that this is a time for growth in depth, influence, number and younger. Come and join us in God's mission in this beautiful part of Suffolk. We look forward to working with you!

Revd Canon Susan Loxton and Lay Chair, Mary Lewis





 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Where are we?

The diocese covers the county of Suffolk, excluding the area around Lowestoft in the north-east, and one parish in Essex. It is a mainly rural diocese with a large number of small villages, plus market towns including Woodbridge, Halesworth, Sudbury and Beccles and the cathedral town of Bury St Edmunds with its historic ruins of the old Abbey. Ipswich is the county town with a population of about 137,000. Suffolk's population is c 650,000. The county embraces historic places of interest such as Sutton Hoo, culture at Snape with the famous annual Aldeburgh music festival, is on the Heritage coast and is a haven for lovers of natural history and birdlife. The busy port of Felixstowe is at the end of the A14 which runs via Cambridge to the Midlands and the A12 which gives access to London and the Norfolk Broads.

Who are we?

We are often known as 'the Church of England in Suffolk'. The diocesan bishop is the Right Reverend Martin Seeley, and the suffragan bishop is the Right Reverend Dr Mike Harrison. Both work from the Bishop's House in Ipswich. They work together closely to help us shape our vision and strategy, and amongst a plethora of other tasks offer regular teaching mornings to nurture the faith of people in our congregations –and a regular Vlog which can be found on Facebook. There are 3 archdeaconries and over 450 churches where visitors will find a wide range of worshipping styles, from the traditional to contemporary, as well as Fresh Expressions and growing numbers of 'Lightwave' groups for those who haven't connected with traditional church previously. The Cathedral of St Edmund and St James in Bury St Edmunds is the mother church of the diocese and is proactive in offering support to clergy and parishes including welcoming parishes on pilgrimage. We also work closely with our 88 Church of England primary schools. All this is, of course, supported by a small and committed diocesan staff based in the diocesan office in Ipswich.

What is our vision?

Our diocesan vision is to be 'Growing in God', aiming to grow 'flourishing congregations making a difference'. This vision was accepted by Diocesan Synod in 2014 and since then we have been focussing on four key priorities:

- ✚ Growing in Depth: responding to the call of Christ in every part of our lives
- ✚ Growing in Number: drawing the contacts we have into the life of God's kingdom
- ✚ Growing in Influence: reaching beyond ourselves in our impact on the wider world
- ✚ Growing Younger; building churches whose age-range reflects our communities

Parishes are encouraged to use a simple Mission Action Planning tool to help us all to focus on these priorities and how they might be worked out in each different context. We are trusting God that this vision, underpinned by a commitment to Christian stewardship, will bear fruit as we look to the future.

As part of this vision, we have recently received strategic development funding for two major projects: Inspiring Ipswich, overseen by the Archdeacon of Ipswich, which aims to grow the church in Ipswich through church planting and reaching out to those who live in the town, and Growing God in the Countryside, overseen by the Archdeacon for Rural Mission, which focusses on developing rural resourcing churches and nurturing and discipling new Christians through small Lightwave groups.

We have also been part of a pilot scheme exploring how we can use our church buildings more creatively both for those who worship regularly and for the benefit of our communities and many churches have benefitted from this.

We are broadening our vision through a growing partnership with the Diocese of Kagera in Tanzania, with fruitful visits and links being established.

How can we do this?

We value our huge range of different ministries: we have over 100 stipendiary clergy, plus many SSM and PTO clergy as well as lay and ordained chaplains who can be found in such diverse places as schools, prisons, hospitals, hospices, the army, RAF and the police. Some clergy are ordained to serve in their local benefice through our pioneering 'auxiliary ordination pathway' which enables people's vocations to ordained ministry to be discerned within the diocese.

All clergy work alongside lay ministers - readers, elders and the growing number people exercising recently introduced licensed ministries: pioneer ministers, evangelists, youth ministers and children's and family workers. Our ministry deployment principles encourage teams or clusters of lay and ordained ministers to work together so that clergy feel less isolated and ministry resources the mission of the church more effectively. We are just beginning to develop the principle of 'local ministers' in our benefices, releasing people's gifts to serve in their locality.

We are excited about these new developments which are playing an important part in our diocesan vision of Growing in God.

So, in summary:

As our Growing in God vision states, we aspire to be people who know that 'God is with us, gathering us as Christ-centred communities, calling us to make Christian disciples, sending us in loving service, empowering us by the Holy Spirit'.

We hope you will come and join us on our journey!

To find out more, visit www.cofesuffolk.org

Appendix 1 – Services

	1 st Sunday	2 nd Sunday	3 rd Sunday	4 th Sunday
St Nicholas Bedfield	10.30am Holy Communion (CW)	10.30am Family Service		10.30am Morning Praise
St Lawrence Brundish	9am Holy Communion (BCP)	10am Village Worship (lay led)		10.30am Holy Communion (CW)
St Mary Cratfield		6pm Evensong (BCP)	9am Village Worship	9am Holy Communion (BCP)
All Saints Laxfield	10.30am Celtic Morning Service (lay led)	10.30am Holy Communion (CW)	10.30am Holy Communion (CW)	10.30am Fourth Sunday Worship (lay led)
St Peter Monk Soham	11am Family Service	11am Morning Prayer (BCP)	11am Holy Communion (CW/BCP)	11am Morning Prayer (BCP)
St Ethelbert Tannington	11am Holy Communion (BCP) <i>alternate months with Worlingworth</i>			
St Mary Wilby	10.30am Village Worship (lay led)	10.30am Holy Communion (BCP)	10.30am Village Worship (lay led)	10.30am Morning Prayer (BCP/Celtic)
St Mary Worlingworth	11am Holy Communion (BCP) <i>alternate months with Tannington</i>	11am Let's Celebrate (lay led)	11am Holy Communion (CW)	11am Morning Prayer (BCP/CW) (lay led)

CW Common Worship

BCP Prayer Book

Services are led by clergy unless otherwise stated.

A Benefice Communion Service is held when there is a 5th Sunday in the month; this is in a different church each time. There are generally no other services on that day.

There is a service of Celtic Evening Prayer every Wednesday at 7pm and a service of Celtic Morning Prayer every Friday at 9am. These take place online via Zoom and are led by a small team of clergy and laity.