



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich



Bridge

COMMUNITY. MOVEMENT. CHURCH.



Pioneer Leader of Bridge Communities

Church Profile

Bridge Communities are looking for a leader who...

Foundations

- Has encountered God personally, been changed and is filled with the Holy Spirit, humbly obeying His guiding.
- Has a passionate belief and faith that the Bible is God's inspired word for us today and always seeks the truth that is revealed through it.
- Practices regular prayer and worship, believing they are core to living as a child of God.

Vision

- Shares our vision for community and church which is focused "out there", measuring success in seeing God working and changing lives.
- Buys into our vision to **build micro-church through micro-community**, supporting us in our activities and being willing to lead us into new areas — discerning together where God is leading and encouraging fresh growth in line with this calling.
- Practically signs up to "the priesthood of all believers" and with a pastoral heart seeks to empower individuals in the church family to exercise their gifts and calling.
- Believes that Jesus meets us where we are, with no pre-conditions.
- Is passionate about safeguarding in heart and action.

Practical (What we'd love from a leader)

- A person of authentic life and faith, who spends time with God.
- Leads creatively and collaboratively under the Holy Spirit.
- Flexible and fluid, not bound by traditionalism, not afraid to try and 'fail'.
- Humble to grow with us and bring the love of Jesus to those around us.
- Committed to engaging with unchurched and 'de-churched' outside of church buildings/structures.
- A person who values hospitality and shared meals.
- Willing to embrace new ways of worship and building community.
- We need a Bible teacher for today's world. Someone who allows time to discuss and raise questions, where we can work out our understanding together under the guidance of our leader and the Holy Spirit.
- We need someone who is gifted to lead us in attracting families and serving their needs.
- Someone who measures growth by depth, not by numbers.



Who are we?

Who Are We?

Bridge Communities is a growing network of worshipping communities passionate about following Jesus and creating accessible, authentic expressions of church that connect meaningfully with people who may not feel comfortable in traditional church settings. We are committed to being relational, relevant, and rooted in Christ — building bridges between faith and everyday life.

Our Ethos & Vision.

Our ethos and vision are important. They express what we do and what we long to see God do through us. Our vision is to create community, movement, and church which transforms people and places. We do this through the formation of **micro-communities** and **micro-churches**. This is central to who we are and how we understand church.

A **micro-community** is a small group of people who come alongside others to serve, bless, and share life together. A **micro-church** grows out of this — with Jesus-centred worship included. These are the building blocks of Bridge Communities and the lens through which we approach ministry and mission.

We always aim to be accessible, understandable, hospitable, and willing to pioneer. We believe that by building micro-church through micro-community we can support one another, serve our local areas, and discern together new ways for God's vision to grow. This is both our identity and our future.



What kind of church are we seeking to be?

Words from our church families:

"Warmth and enthusiasm, a sense of family and a passion for Jesus."

"A supportive, prayerful and flexible community, embracing 'weakness' and vulnerability in members and leaders; no sense of 'them and us'; all figuring it out together."

"Great food! Fun."

"People who are prepared to step up and take the lead on different initiatives as led by the Holy Spirit."

"Committed to supporting our leader and family by prayer and practical help, paying attention to their interests, passions, life-stages and struggles"

"All are equally valued and Bridge members are open with life and it's 'messy bits'"

"We seek to be family together."

Our History.

Bridge Church was planted in January 2020 from St Matthew's Parish Church, Ipswich, as part of the Inspiring Ipswich initiative. Our original plans to gather at St Nicholas Church in Ipswich were unexpectedly interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, we launched online, which shaped much of our early development.



During lockdown, a Book Club — already established by Bridge members — became a vital place of community. This inclusive group, welcoming those inside and outside of the church, met online to discuss various books, often sparking deep conversations about faith and life. These relationships remain strong, and the group continues to meet monthly in person.



Following the easing of restrictions, we resumed in-person gatherings at St Nicholas Church. One of our members, a qualified counsellor, felt called to start a Wellbeing Café in town. Hosted in collaboration with a local venue, On the Huh Café, this safe and welcoming space quickly grew, supporting many from the wider community and connecting with GP referrals and those seeking emotional and mental health support.

As St Nicholas Church prepared for sale, we explored alternative venues, gathering in public spaces such as the town library. Eventually, we discerned a clear sense that

God was calling us outward — not to own a building but to be present in the community. This missional approach felt affirmed by the impact and relationships built through the Book Club and Wellbeing Café.

In light of this shift, we rebranded as Bridge Communities, reflecting our broader and more relational vision of being church in and around the communities we serve.

By this time, we were active across several towns and villages in Suffolk, particularly in Ipswich, Stowmarket, and Holbrook — areas with diverse populations, ranging from urban professionals to refugees and families navigating significant transitions.

In response to this diversity, we became part of the Lightwave Community, a growing network of small, missional expressions of church across rural and urban Suffolk. The Lightwave Community supports our ethos of being “church where life happens.”

Governance Matters with Bridge Communities

The Lightwave Community BMO

Within the diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Bridge Communities sit under the governance of the wider Lightwave Community (BMO). The Lightwave Community is a dispersed church community within the diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, made up of small disciple-making groups and fresh expressions of church which embrace shared practices and have a focus on innovative mission. It is governed and accountable under a Bishop's Mission Order and functions as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with a Board of Trustees.

You can find out more at <https://www.lightwave.community/governance-and-partners>

Bridge Leadership Team (SAS)

The Bridge Leadership Team, also known as the **SAS**, stands for *Strategy and Steering*. It is our version of a DCC (District Church Council). The SAS provides prayerful oversight, strategic direction, and accountability for Bridge Communities. Members of the team meet regularly to listen to God together, discern vision, and make practical decisions that enable our micro-communities and micro-churches to flourish. Rather than functioning as a traditional committee, the SAS seeks to embody our values of collaboration, openness, and shared leadership — encouraging initiative, empowering others, and holding us true to our ethos and mission. The SAS also acts as a point of connection with the wider Diocese and with other groups in the Lightwave Community. One of our SAS members currently serves on the Lightwave Community Board of Trustees. In addition, a part-time administrator is in post to support you with administrative responsibilities — from communication and scheduling to general organisation — enabling you to focus more fully on leading and **community activities**.

Practical Ministry Commitments

We are committed to:

- Safeguarding all involved in our communities.
- Encouraging team leadership and recognising the gifts of all members.
- Operating with financial transparency and accountability.
- Supporting emerging leaders through mentoring and training.
- Working in partnership with parishes and wider networks like Together for Ipswich.
- Being responsive to the needs of the communities we serve, regularly evaluating and adapting our approach.

Everyday Life with Bridge Communities

Bridge Communities currently meet in homes and public spaces rather than a traditional church building. This gives us flexibility and closeness in how we gather.

Worship at Bridge.

- **Sunday House Churches** meet weekly in Ipswich, Stowmarket, and Holbrook. These gatherings include worship, Bible study, life-sharing, hospitality, a warm welcome and more often than not food!
- **Roots**, a micro-church born from two Alpha courses, meets midweek in Holbrook. Several members of this group have recently been baptised.

Each gathering is shaped by the needs and rhythms of its members, prioritising deep relationships and discipleship in everyday contexts.

Our style of worship reflects our values of family, participation, and authenticity. We encourage everyone to share — whether through prayer, story, or reflection. Our gatherings are shaped by openness: time to discuss the Bible together, space to ask questions, and the freedom to wonder and learn as a community. We aim for a family feel, where children, young people, and adults belong together, each voice valued. Hospitality and a sharing of food are a core part of how we worship and grow in faith side by side.



Activities and Partnerships



On the Huh Café – Community Partnership

Our ongoing partnership with On the Huh Café has become central to our mission:

- On Mondays, we hire the café to create a Community Café space. The early afternoon is used for remote working and informal meetings; the afternoon opens as a welcoming public café.
- The café has employed an Iranian refugee as a part-time barista on our behalf, supporting both inclusion and economic empowerment.
- Courses such as Introduction to Sign Language and spiritual discussion groups have been hosted here, leading to real interest in baptism and deeper faith conversations.

Ukrainian Wellbeing Café

Prompted by a request from Together for Ipswich, we launched a Ukrainian Wellbeing Café that runs weekly. This space has become a vital connection point for displaced families, offering:

- Activities for children
- Opportunities to shape their own programme
- Occasional spiritual content, often initiated by attendees
- Open conversations about faith, prayer, and the story of Jesus

On two Fridays each month, during the café's regular opening hours, we run a Wellbeing Café that offers a gentle and welcoming space for anyone walking through loss, depression, or loneliness. It's a place to be heard, supported, and encouraged.

Our café partnership continues to model a lived faith in Jesus — one of compassion, hospitality, and presence.

Vision for the Future

Bridge Communities is not defined by a building or a single style of worship. We are a movement of people following Jesus, intentionally present in everyday spaces, believing that church can happen wherever life happens.

We're excited for the journey ahead — growing deeper in discipleship, broader in outreach, and stronger in the relationships that carries the heartbeat of our vision.

We believe the future of church is:

- Relational, more than institutional
- Decentralised, but deeply connected
- Culturally aware and spiritually grounded

We envision more micro-churches, shaped around neighbourhoods, interest groups, and specific needs. Each gathering will remain rooted in Scripture, worship, prayer, and practical love.

We long to see:

- More people exploring faith in everyday settings.
- Continued partnerships with local venues and businesses.
- Discipleship pathways that begin with belonging.
- A growing culture of baptism, story-sharing, and spiritual formation.



About the 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 gives access to London and the Norfolk Broads.

Who are we?

We are often known as 'the Church of England in Suffolk'. Our new Bishop, soon to be enthroned is the Right Rev'd Joanne Grenfell. 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 focuses 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 and fresh expressions of Church 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.

How can we fulfil our "Growing in God" vision?

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 of people exercising recently introduced licensed ministries: pioneer ministers, evangelists, youth ministers and children's and family workers.

We are excited about these ongoing 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'

Explore becoming Bridge communities' pioneer leader...

Terms & Conditions of Service

We have made pay a level of parish share to enable us to have a part-time leader on a stipend 0.5 f.t.e. No house will be provided but there would be a housing allowance. However, we are open to lay people applying for this role and with the Bishop's agreement, being licensed as a lay pioneer minister. We are open to consider a variety of models of structuring ministry and remuneration, depending on the needs of the person God calls.

Next steps...

You can look at what we have been up to by visiting

Our socials [@bridge_communities](#)

Our website: www.bridgecommunities.org.uk

Because we are an unusual form of church within the Church of England, we think the process of discernment needs to include getting to know candidates before interview.

We would like you to accompany us a little on our journey without obligation – to pray with us; to experience and engage in our worship, teaching and outreach activities.

In the first instance, please contact Archdeacon Rich Henderson at archdeacon.rich@cofesuffolk.org

