



What do *you* find
through church†

Church Toolkit

A guide to our outreach campaign



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What do *you* find
through church?

Welcome



The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison

Jesus is God's body language – God's way of communicating with us, and in sending Jesus God shows that communication and the desire to communicate are central to God's being.

As God's Church we are also called to communicate to our world, not least God's love and truth in Jesus. And good communication is essential for our calling to be effective. Hence my delight in being able to commend this communications tool kit to ministers and churches.

This is a timely resource. Curiosity about Christian faith is on the rise according to recent surveys and the pandemic has seen new and diverse constituencies engaging with on-line activities and Christian spirituality as well as new ways of worshipping and serving others. This toolkit provides a resource to parishes to develop communications and outreach as we emerge from lockdown, seeking to provide ways into the church and remove barriers to engagement.

The people this resource is aiming at are those at various stages of connecting with church, providing stories of real people with whom they

can identify, people who have found engaging with the Christian faith through Church to be enriching in different ways.

This toolkit is the first part of a larger offering from the communications team which is looking to utilise social media, posters and other means to enable parishes to share what they are doing and what they offer in attractive, accessible ways to foster greater participation and involvement.

I hope you will find it useful and I would encourage you to ask for help from the Diocesan communications team if there are other ways you want to enhance your outward-focused communications.

Toolkit introduction

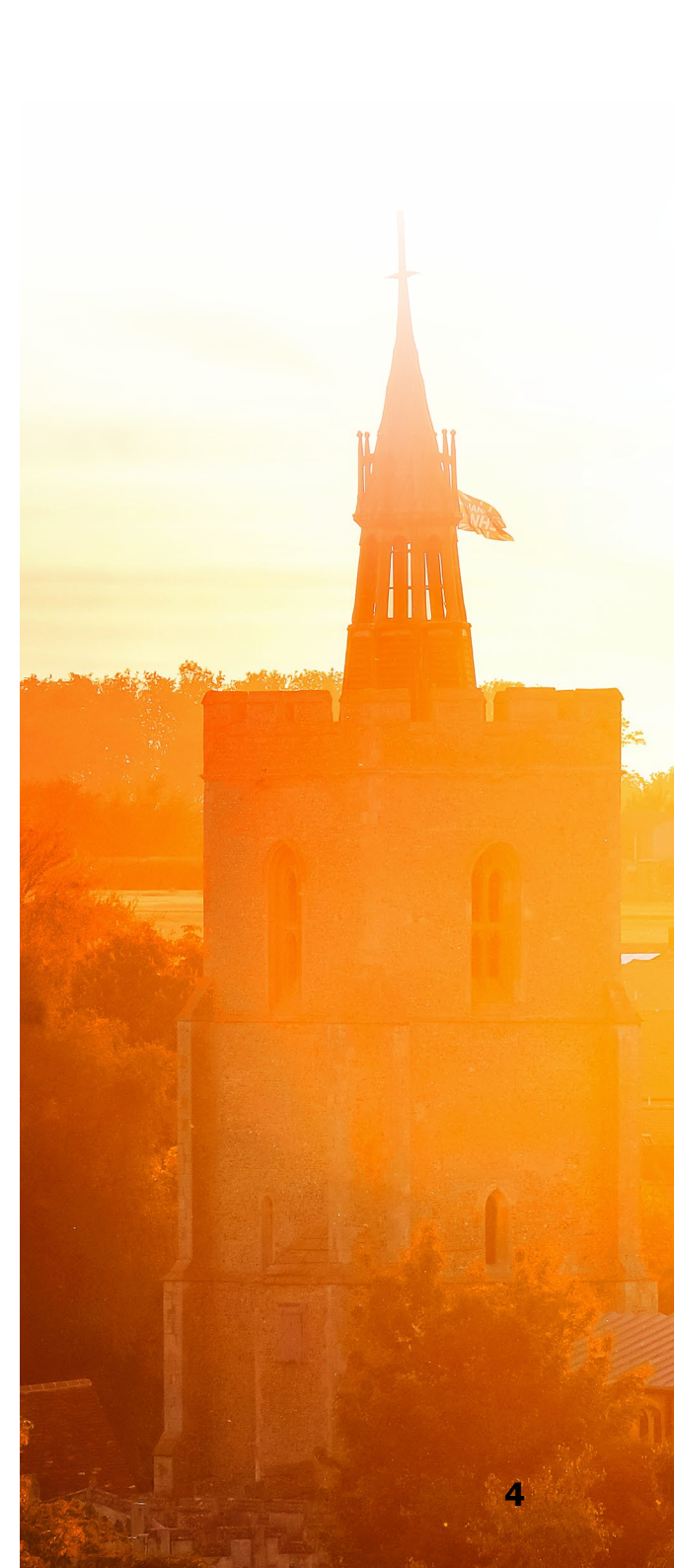
This Toolkit is designed to allow Suffolk parishes like yours to take part in and benefit from our communications campaign.

The campaign is built around the real-life stories of Suffolk residents who have found faith and fulfilment through their involvement in church life.

Our aim in sharing stories is to connect with other people who hold back, to encourage them to find out more and make the first move towards church and its community.

Our theme is 'What do you find through church?' which encourages those to whom it asks the question to consider their own lives and how church might become part of them.

In the toolkit you will find the stories in full, guides on how to use them and links to downloadable documents including PowerPoints, artwork for print and social media templates.



Why has this campaign come about?

This campaign links into the Diocesan objective of deepening faith and service, growing awareness and engagement of non-Church residents of the Diocese with the Church of England.

We tell the story of the Church of England in Suffolk to those who may not be aware of what it achieves in our communities, and so inspire and encourage the greater involvement of non-churchgoers in local activities.

This campaign will allow us to spur secular engagement as well as with people of faith, and encourage people to re-engage or even engage for the first time.



Clear themes have emerged from our research:

1. We currently lean towards older people, with younger people less engaged. However, younger people's lives and choices have been thrown into chaos by Covid-19.
2. Increasingly people yearn for meaning, belief and comfort.
3. Many people who are Christian are not actively part of a church congregation and research shows a sense of apathy. There is the opportunity for us to be more vocal and bold.
4. 'Church' comes in in two forms. Our buildings are a physical community asset, a highly visible icon and gathering point. Our mission is to provide community good because of participants' faith, not in expectation of recipients' faith.
5. The church must look outward, not inward; and consider on-line engagement and social media to reach people.
6. The coronavirus pandemic lockdown, for all its difficulties, has offered a period of reflection for many, and positive engagement with their local communities which provides an opportunity for the church.
7. The church needs to show kindness, and be present.
8. Consultation with Clergy revealed a need for outward focus, online engagement (in particular social media), community engagement and growth.

What do *you* find through church?

How will this work?

We open up the church to people by showing people like them reaping benefits from their involvement, and giving back.

We have created a small suite of case studies of real people within the community.

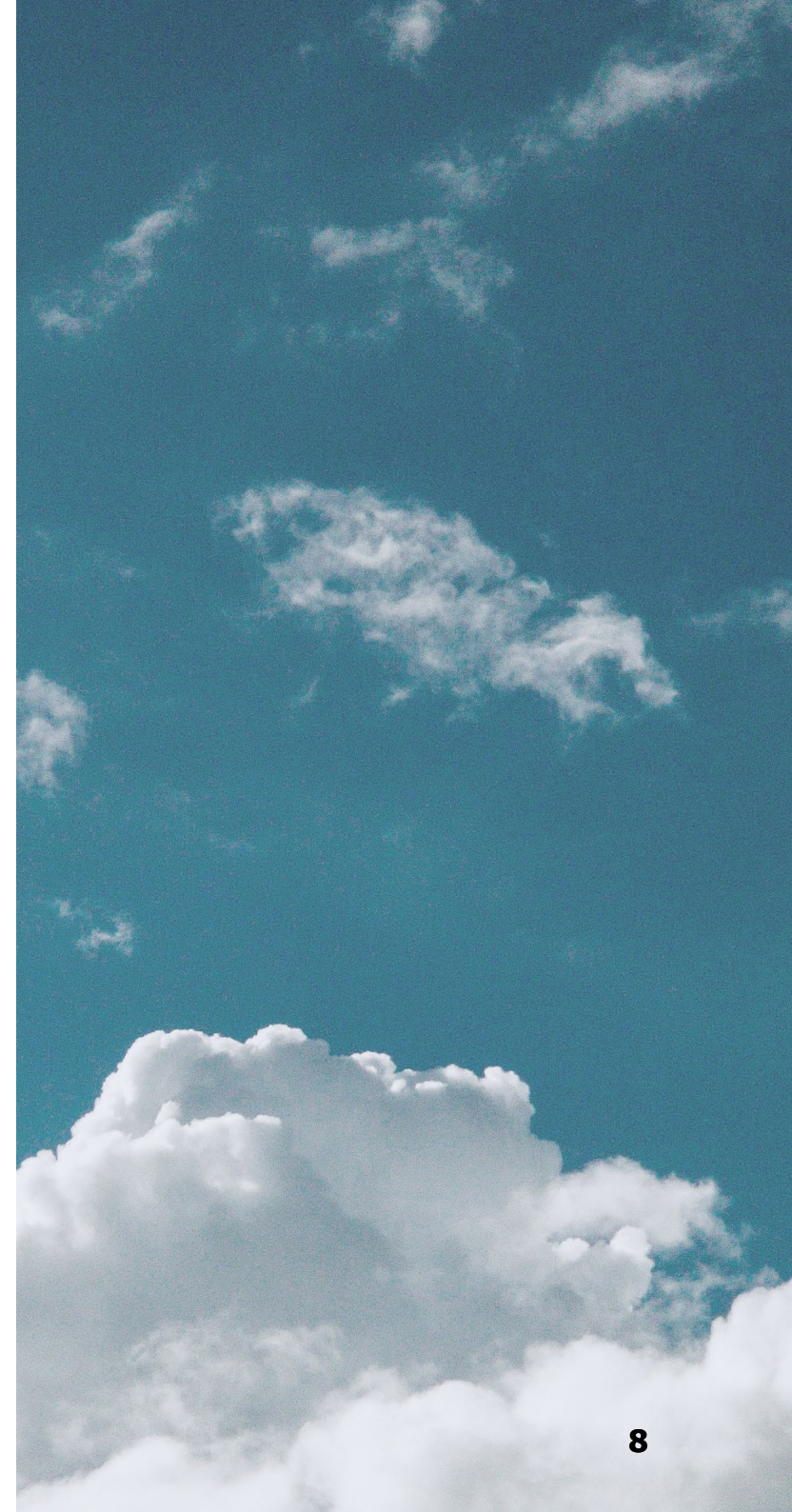
Following brief interviews with Maxine, René and Martha, the written case studies are featuring on the website and social media as well as in our communications and PR. This allows us to highlight exciting initiatives that help to grow the church's connection to people in the diocese.

We have created ads for use on-line and in print, and we are delivering an organic social media campaign.

To help you grow the campaign in your own church, we have created this toolkit so that you can share not just these stories but also stimulate conversation and gather your own stories using the question 'What do you find through church?'. This will allow you to share your own anecdotes and insights.



People's stories





René Moor, Company Director

St Michael's Beccles congregation

As a child, René was brought up in a traditional Dutch Reformed Church. Having rebelled against it as a teenager and moved to England, it took him until his 30s to rediscover church, though his desire for spiritual nourishment and direction stayed strong throughout.

When René met his soon to be fiancée, he found church again through members of her family, and felt so welcomed that he decided to get confirmed into the Church of England.

That was a decade ago, and René says, "I found a church community that put kindness and acceptance first. My parish priest became a confidante and advisor to me, helping me to find spiritual enrichment as my career grew."

But when his priest retired René decided to move church, and whilst he looked, he felt spiritually homeless. Like so many people, he was nervous of going into a new church. What would he find behind those big oak doors? How would he be received?

Over time, René says, "My desire to reconnect with worship made me find the courage to push open those doors to St Michael's church in Beccles, and that courage was rewarded from that very first Sunday. I received a warm, enthusiastic welcome; and knew that I had found just the right church."

Now, René derives great joy from the routines and reflection that this church allows in his

increasingly pressured life, working as an optician and managing the business during a global pandemic. That hour on a Sunday morning - up first in the household, heading into town, letting the rhythms of the church service bring comfort and enlightenment - is a point of peace in the week.

Of course there is more to a church community than services, and René enjoys the opportunity to take part in ways that fit around his life. He is a regular speaker at services, can sometimes be found burger flipping at social events, and takes part in home groups discussing books and all things spiritual.

He's shopped for the foodbank, and will be training for more involvement in services soon.

René's overriding view of his place in the community he has found at St Michael's is that it has given him the opportunity to be part of something greater than himself: an active, tolerant and kindly group of people who are guided and enhanced by their faith.

What does René find through church?
Peace



Maxine Simpson, Volunteer

The Lightwave Community

It was through her volunteering with Lightwave that Maxine came to faith. Her journey has been gradual, until last Christmas Eve she felt confident enough to take her first communion at All Saints Church in Newmarket.

Maxine wanted to do something useful and Lightwave seemed like the right way to do it: working in rural villages around her community, helping people across the generations. Whilst some activities like toddler groups have naturally been impacted by the current situation, others have become more necessary.

From the start of the pandemic, Maxine helped to get food packs and internet training to elderly people, who found their normal shops closed and themselves ill-equipped to take up online shopping slots.

That gave her a sense that she had a clear purpose and could make a difference - and in turn, she found the Covid-19 situation easier to cope with. Volunteering without exploring faith, however, left her with her spiritual needs unfulfilled. As she became aware of this and curious to know more, she embarked on Alpha, an introduction to Christianity course, which helped her to understand her call to faith and its place in her life.

Maxine is now a member of an on-line Bible study group, where she has found herself in diverse company she knows she would

be unlikely to have met in other ways, and amongst whom she thrives.

The Communion service last Christmas Eve was the first time in her life she felt completely at home in a church, which she describes as an almost physical yearning to become a regular churchgoer somewhere. And her adult daughter, having seen the way Maxine is flourishing, is keen to start an Alpha course with her mum.

Having come to faith later in life, she has encountered a little scepticism from friends along the way. But their initial concerns about the changes they saw in her melted away when they saw that those changes were entirely positive, and Maxine was still in every other way the warm, humorous, kind friend they knew and loved.

Still a very active part of the Lightwave community, Maxine describes herself as now being fulfilled. Her faith completes her life, reduces her anxiety and helps her put things into perspective.

What does Maxine find through church?
Fulfilment



Martha South, Student

Bridge Church, Ipswich

Martha grew up in a Christian household. As a teenager she thought long and hard about her faith, which really came into its own during the stress of lockdown when she and her sister both found themselves out of school at crucial times in their education.

2020 was due to be a big year in the South family - Martha was taking A levels, her sister GCSEs and their mum was retraining and taking exams too. So when lockdown was announced in March their household was turned upside down, in common with so many others. The impacts of Covid-19 on young people's health and wellbeing has been well researched and documented; this was a time of intense pressure for Martha, and the loss of her usual physical church community made it even harder.

Martha says, "I enjoy the sense of community at Bridge Church: it allows me to meet people of all ages, get to know them and be part of something bigger. I've really missed that during lockdown." She is feeling the loss of in-person services, and playing in the church band. Her church has adapted to the situation by offering online worship, and she's been able to keep the book club she runs going virtually; a great link with the varied people she's met through Bridge Church.

Digital technology has allowed Martha to connect with her faith in other ways too, when she most needs it. As she takes her first steps

into a new career - delayed too, by the impacts of Covid-19 restrictions - she can bring faith into her everyday life through things like an app which sends her a short excerpt from the Bible once a day, at random times.

And it was this quote from Philippians that came to her, struck a chord and has comforted her throughout: 'Don't worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks for what you have'. As a teenager, the influence of those around her can sometimes feel stronger than God's influence, so these subtle points of connection bring her peace.

As we inch out of lockdown, Martha is looking forward to getting back to church, being back there with people, and enjoying the groups and activities it allows her to take part in. She is relieved to replace the distance she has felt from her community with real connection and belonging.

What does Martha find through church?
Belonging

Materials



PowerPoint presentation

Sharing the campaign's stories with your community.

These stories help us to understand what people throughout Suffolk find through their experiences of church, and what they bring to their church community and connection with God. You can download a complete PowerPoint presentation to share, or create your own using the page templates we provide.

The PowerPoint includes blank templates slides so you can create your own additions for your particular circumstances.

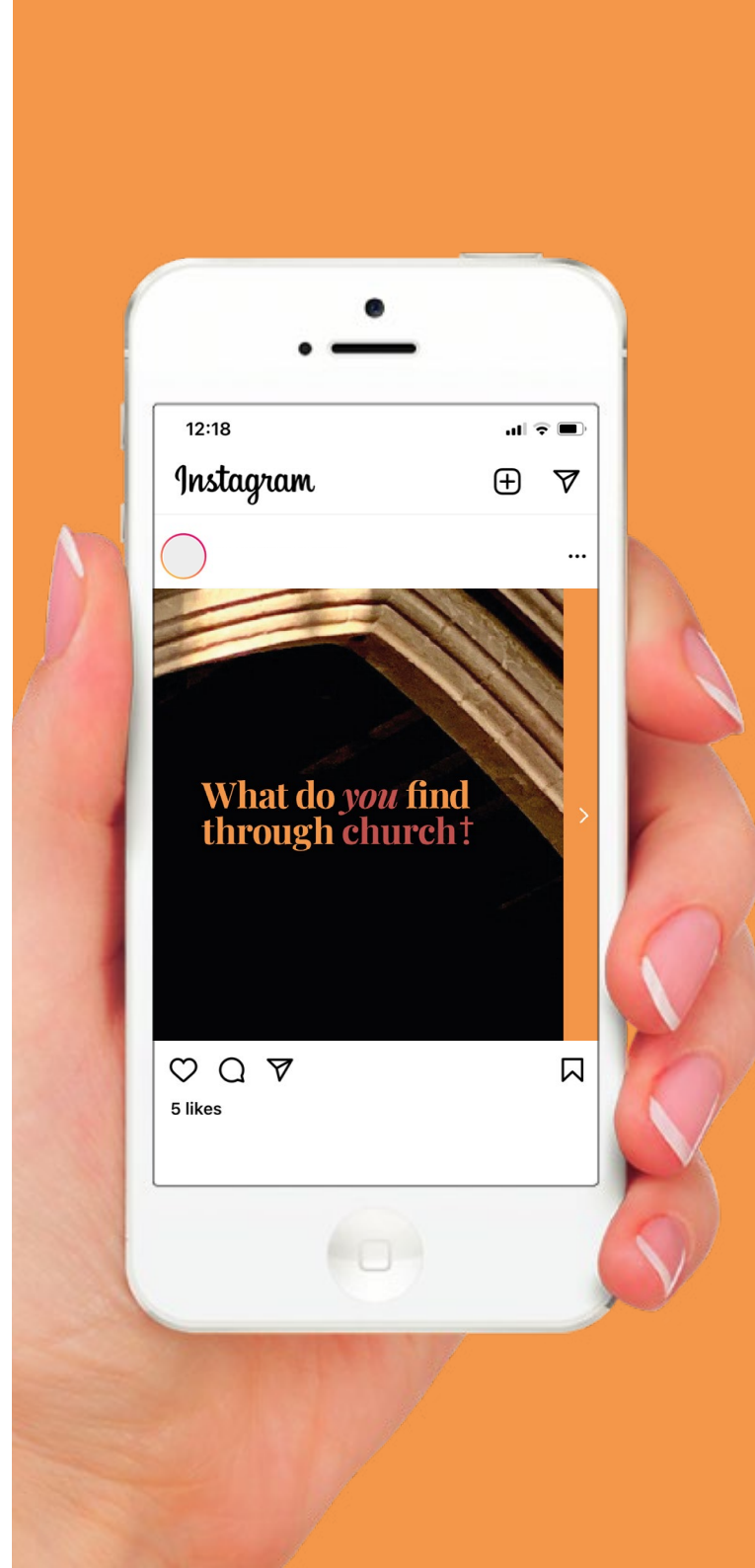


Organic social media posts

For five weeks, the Diocesan communications team will be sharing these stories on social media.

You can share posts on your networks too, and later in this document you will find a link to the files to download.

You can also 'like' the Diocese on Facebook (Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich), 'follow' on Instagram (@CofESuffolk) and share, comment on and 'like' the campaign posts as we publish them.



Peace

That hour on a Sunday morning is a *point of peace* in the week.

What do *you* find through church?

René Moor, Optician

René rediscovered church in his 30s, and like many of us, had to find courage. *What would he find behind those big oak doors?*

He received a warm welcome and now loves the routines and reflection church allows in his increasingly pressurised life.

That hour on a Sunday morning is a *point of peace* in the week.

Peace

Visit cofesuffolk.org to find out more about the Church in Suffolk.

What do *you* find through church?

Your website

Campaign banner

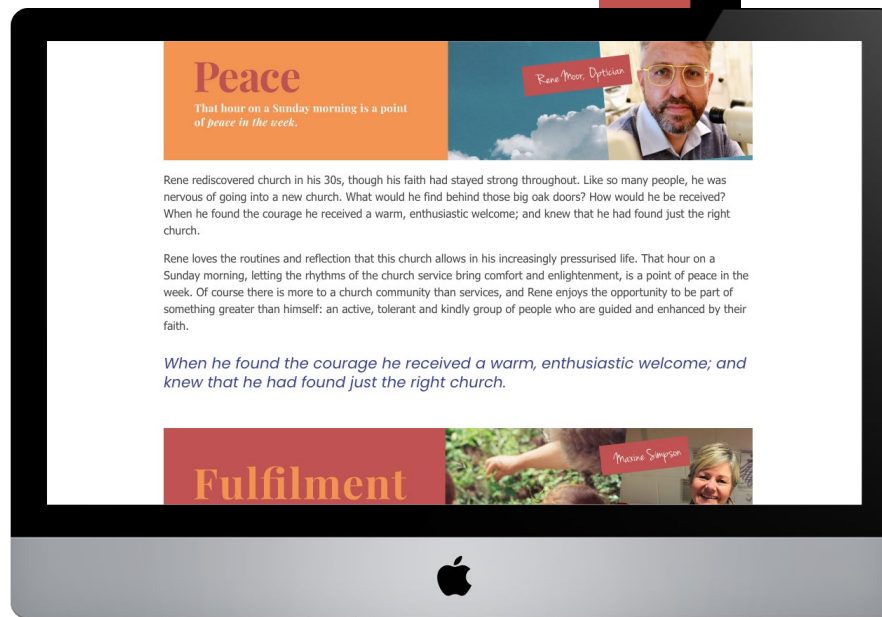
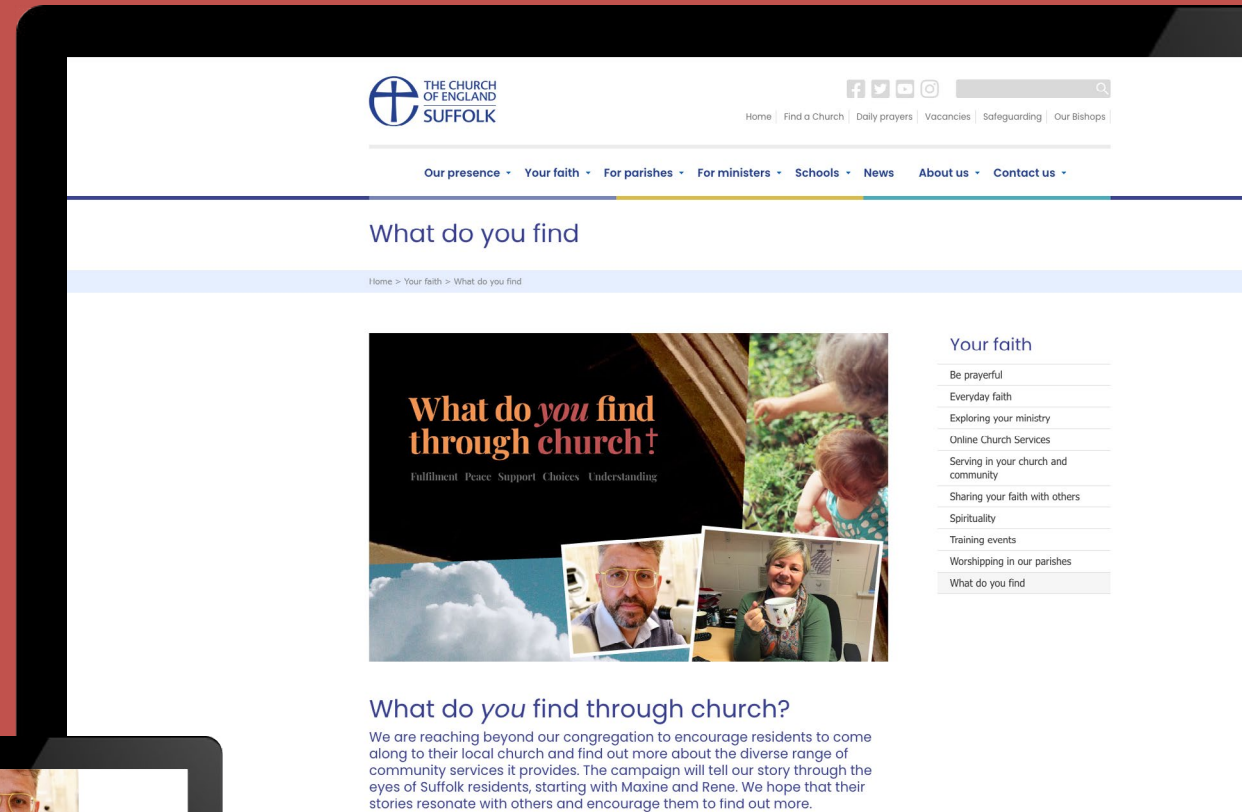
We have created a campaign banner for your own website to tell visitors about the stories.

Story banners

You'll also find brief story snippets that you can add to your website as images.

Stories

The full stories are in this document for you to add to your website.



Print materials

Posters

You'll find each of the stories as a poster for your notice boards in church and out and about in your parish. Bright and eye-catching, these posters share the essential details and explain to people how they can take first steps towards their own church community. These can also be downloaded via a link later in this toolkit.



Print materials

Pew cards and leaflets

For other uses, in church and out and about in your parish, we have supplied A5 leaflets and convenient pew cards for you to download and print. Just like the posters, these share summaries of the stories and invite people to connect with their parish church or other church community.



Local Media

Press release

Most parishes have their own magazines, and community magazines and websites run by other organisations. You will find a press release for download, which you can adapt for your own parish, to allow you to publicise this campaign through those publications.

Communications and further PR and "How To?" guides are available on the Diocesan website.

Top Tips for an effective Press Release

1

Include your contact information as name, phone and email at the end.

2

Include print-ready photographs or video content with photographer details.

Useful links

Campaign materials

[Can be downloaded from here](#)

For further information please contact:

leonie.ryle@cofesuffolk.org

These links take you to artwork and live files for campaign assets, so you can use them in your own parish.

What do *you* find through church?

Need help?

Leonie Ryle | Communications Manager

Leonie.Ryle@cofesuffolk.org

spring