

COMBINED PROFILE OF THE LARK & LEE GROUP OF PARISHES IN THE FOREST HEATH TEAM BENEFICE

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Combined Profile for the Lark and Lee Group of Parishes in the Forest Heath Team Benefice

Introduction

Details of the Post

Role title: Team Vicar of the Forest Heath Team Benefice.

Deanery: Mildenhall.

Archdeaconry: Sudbury.

This is a varied and exciting dual role. The successful candidate will serve the Lark and Lee Group, which comprises the 4 largely rural parishes of Barton Mills, Freckenham, West Row and Worlington, and will live in the vicarage at Barton Mills. However, as Team Vicar, they will also share responsibility for the running of the much larger Forest Heath Team Benefice.

In addition to the Lark and Lee Group, the Benefice has three other components, each with its own incumbent. These are –

- ✚ The parish of Mildenhall, which is led by the Revd Sue Leathley.
- ✚ The Brecks Group, comprising the parishes of Beck Row with Kenny Hill, Eriswell, Icklingham, and Tuddenham with Cavenham, Herringswell and Red Lodge, and led by the Revd David Butcher.
- ✚ The Kennett Valley Group, comprising the parishes of Dalham, Gazeley, Higham Green, Kentford and Moulton, and led by the Revd Canon Chris Childs who is the Team Rector and also Rural Dean of the Mildenhall Deanery.

Moreover, the Lightwave Community, which aims to promote small missional groups and fresh expressions of Church and whose local representative is the Revd Diane Grano, operates a Rural Resourcing Hub in Red Lodge which immediately abuts the parish of Worlington.

Individual Profiles are appended for each part of the Team.

Where We Are

The 16 parishes in the Benefice cover an area of roughly 65 square miles in north-west Suffolk, where it borders Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. Taking Barton Mills as its approximate geographical centre, Bury St Edmunds, recently named by The Times as one of the top 20 market towns in the country and home to our Diocesan cathedral, lies some 10 miles to the south-east. Newmarket, which is the headquarters of the UK's horseracing and bloodstock industries, is about 5 miles to the south-west.

Further west, Cambridge with all its attractions is approximately 30 minutes' drive away and the A11 and A14 trunk roads provide ready access to the national motorway network. The cathedral cities of Ely, Norwich and Peterborough and the mediaeval wool towns of Clare, Lavenham and Long Melford can all be reached in less than an hour. Also within easy striking distance are Thetford Forest and several Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including those on the coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk, the Norfolk Broads and the Stour Valley.

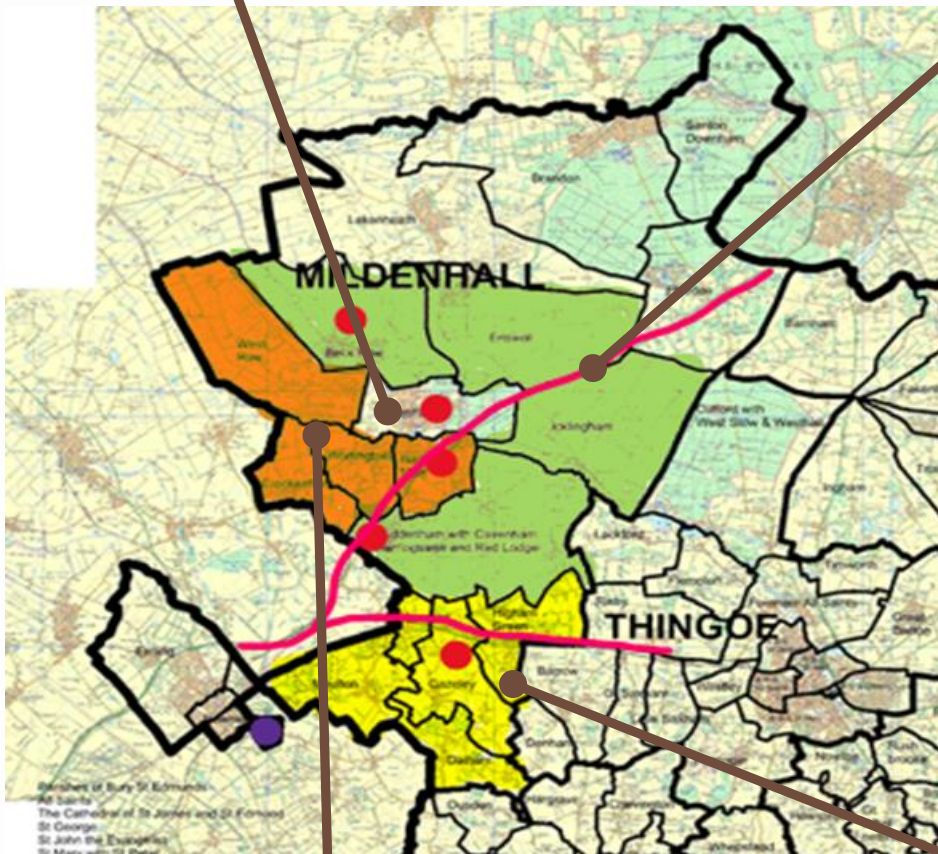
Map of the Forest Heath Team Benefice showing the current groupings

Mildenhall

Population c.12,000.
 (Including USAF personnel from RAF Lakenheath and Mildenhall).
 Incumbent: The Revd Sue Leathley.

The Brecks Group

The parishes of Beck Row with Kenny Hill (population c.5,500*), Eriswell (4,300*), Herringswell (290), Icklingham (390), Red Lodge (6,300) and Tuddenham St Mary (420) with Cavenham (140). Total population, c.17,340. (*Including USAF personnel from RAF Lakenheath and Mildenhall).
 Incumbent: The Revd Dave Butcher



The red dots denote the locations of vicarages, although they are not all presently used as such.
 The red lines show the routes of the A11 and A14 trunk roads.
 The solid black line is the county boundary of Suffolk.

The Lark and Lee Group

The parishes of Barton Mills (population c.2,300), Freckenham (360), West Row (1,900) and Worlington (675). Total population c.5,240.
 Currently vacant.

The Kennett Valley Group

The parishes of Dalham (population c.220), Gazeley (780), Higham (150), Kentford (1,125) and Moulton (920). Total population, c.3,200.
 Incumbent: The Revd Canon Chris Childs, Team Rector and Rural Dean.

The railway stations in Cambridge and Ely have frequent mainline services to London and connecting services throughout East Anglia and to the Midlands and beyond. Our local airports are Luton, Norwich, Stansted and Southend and there are ferry services from Harwich.

What we are looking for

To fill this exciting position, we are looking for a person who is...

- ✚ An inspiring preacher and teacher, rooted in scripture and with a love for pastoral ministry.
- ✚ Comfortable with team working in a multi-parish setting.
- ✚ A confident but flexible leader with a willingness to embrace the breadth of traditional and contemporary worship in the parishes of the Group and to honour their distinctiveness.
- ✚ Able to encourage and facilitate appropriate ways in which the parishes may work harmoniously and productively together and with the other parts of the Benefice.
- ✚ An excellent communicator, with an ability to write clearly, accurately and succinctly and proficient in modern IT skills and the use of social media.
- ✚ Willing to be a highly visible presence in these parishes and to engage with all aspects of community life and particularly with West Row Academy, the local primary school.
- ✚ Able to relate to people of all ages and committed not only to ministering to our existing, often elderly congregations but also to attracting the next generations of worshippers - children, young people and families.
- ✚ Keen to nurture others in prayer and discipleship and to encourage and support any who may be seeking to pursue their own vocations or mission.
- ✚ In tune with and capable of taking forward the Diocese's vision for mission and evangelism, "Growing in God", with its four key priorities of growing in depth; growing in number; growing in influence; and growing younger.
- ✚ Supportive of and willing to work with complementary bodies such as the Lightwave Community and the Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Methodist Church in Red Lodge.

What We Can Offer

The new Team Vicar and their family (if any) will benefit from...

- ✚ The support and fellowship of the Team Rector and two other Team Vicars, all of whom are highly experienced and well established in their present posts, and of a number of retired clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers.
- ✚ Friendly and welcoming congregations, whose worship is regularly enhanced by the Group choir.
- ✚ A willingness on the part of our congregations to be flexible and to experiment with new styles of worship – particularly with a view to attracting more children and younger worshippers.
- ✚ A recognition that our congregations must be outward looking and innovative to interact more closely with the communities they serve and to make our churches more welcoming and relevant.
- ✚ The use of a large, attractive and well-appointed vicarage in a beautiful part of the country with excellent transport links and easy access to a wide range of amenities.
- ✚ Access to good educational facilities. (As well as West Row Academy, there are 2 other primary schools in Red Lodge, one of them CofE, and another in Beck Row. Mildenhall has schools for all age groups, including St Mary's CofE Academy, which serves Early Years to Year 6).
- ✚ The care and support of the wider Diocese, which is keen to ensure that its clergy maintain a realistic and healthy work/life balance and are given the opportunities and resources to develop further their own vocations and ministries. For example, this role will provide the opportunity to develop responsibility for team-wide ministry in particular areas of interest.

The Challenges

- As the Benefice was only created in late 2020, the new Team is still in its infancy. Whilst the clergy are already working well together, congregations have so far shown little desire to collaborate beyond the boundaries of their own parishes or groups of parishes. The task of the Team clergy is therefore to...
 - ✚ Define and develop the objectives of the Team as it evolves and ensure that it is firmly established.
 - ✚ Determine which of the objectives will be best served by parishes acting independently and which by their working collaboratively.
 - ✚ Identify the particular characteristics, gifts and strengths of the individual members of the ministry team and of the lay workers and congregations in each of the parishes so as to ensure that these are harnessed and deployed for the benefit of all.
- This appointment will bring the number of full-time, stipendiary clergy in the Benefice to 4, which sadly is unaffordable for these parishes on the current level of their Parish Share payments. As things stand, if and when one of the clergy Team retires or moves on, they are unlikely to be replaced by another, full-time stipendiary. It is therefore for all of them to help to ...
 - ✚ Encourage a culture of generous giving so as to increase significantly the Benefice's total Parish Share contribution; and/or
 - ✚ Plan for and oversee a substantial re-organisation of the existing parish groupings and a redeployment of the available clergy.

THE LARK AND LEE GROUP

An Overview

The parishes of Barton Mills, Freckenham, West Row and Worlington are where the new Team Vicar will be based (living in the vicarage in Barton Mills) and will be the primary focus of their ministry. They have been grouped together since January 2014 and, as they had not previously worked together, they felt it important to create a sense of identity and took their name from the River Lark and the Lee Brook, which flows into it in West Row. These 4 rural and semi-rural parishes have a combined population of about 5,000 and lie to the south and west of Mildenhall. The Group is functioning very well, with a great appreciation of the diversity of worship on offer and a recognition of the greater strength to be gained through working collaboratively.

Our previous vicar, who has looked after us since 2020 on a house-for-duty basis, has now retired. Based in the Forest Heath Team area are 5 retired clergy, 1 Lay Reader, 1 Licensed Evangelist, 1 Licensed Pioneer and 6 Lay Elders and they, with additional support from a local retired Archdeacon, have enabled us to maintain a very full pattern of worship. There is also a strong tradition of active lay ministry, particularly in West Row and Barton Mills.

The statistics for Occasional Offices have been...

Parish	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
St Mary's, Barton Mills (since January 2022)	2	4	3 (and 1 memorial service)
St Andrew's, Freckenham (since January 2019)	2	4 (and 1 blessing)	13
St Peter's, West Row (since January 2019)	5	1	12
All Saints', Worlington (since January 2022)	1	1	3 (and 2 interments of ashes)

The Vicarage



This is located in Barton Mills, next to the church. Downstairs it has a large kitchen and utility area, lounge, dining room, study and external office, cloakroom and separate accessible WC and wet-room. Upstairs it has 4 bedrooms, all with built-in cupboards, and a family bathroom.

Barton Mills – The Church and its Community

Barton Mills is a village of approximately 2,300 residents on the southern outskirts of Mildenhall. There are no shops or schools but two pubs, a village hall, a well-used playing field and playground, and a newly established football club with a refurbished clubhouse. The village continues to grow with a new housing estate having recently added roughly another 80 homes.

St Mary's church is 12th Century and Grade II* listed but has been adapted to modern usage with glass entrance doors and the replacement of pews with chairs. An electronic organ has replaced the pipe organ and the resulting space has been turned into a side chapel for prayer. The organ has been fitted with a Midi system with about 120 hymns recorded on it and more to follow. The church is open every day during daylight hours and, as well as worship, hosts a range of social and community events. The prefabricated church room is nearing the end of its life but is used by several community groups, including AA, and we are currently exploring ways to develop a new, purpose-built facility. There is an open graveyard attached to the church which is well maintained and much appreciated by Barton Mills residents.

Statement of Individuality
Our motto is: *"Know God; Show God; Share God"*. We see the mission of the church as being to preach the gospel and heal the sick and we seek to do this for all through the rich variety of our worship, our open church, and our engagement with the community.



The electoral roll is 35 and the average congregation 35-40. Our style of worship is evangelical. It is an elderly congregation with few younger people regularly attending Services. (We did run Messy Church sessions which were well supported but were discontinued a few years ago in favour of Café Church which sadly did not generate much enthusiasm. Further attempts at outreach were disrupted for some time by COVID-19 and have not fully recovered).

The present pattern of Sunday worship and average attendances are as follows...

1 st Sunday	9.30 am	CW Holy Communion	(35)
2 nd Sunday	9.30 am	Celebration Service	(30)
	5.00 pm	Healing Service	(15)
3 rd Sunday	9.30 am	CW Holy Communion	(35)
4 th Sunday	9.30 am	Morning Praise (Informal worship)	(30-35)
5 th Sunday	Joint worship as arranged with the other 3 churches of the Group.		

The congregation values the fact that there is a range of worship styles available to suit all tastes.

The church gives 10% of its income each year to home and overseas missions. Our Parish Share has been paid in full in recent years.

A Recent New Initiative

We have recently started a joint “*Praise and Worship*” service with the other churches in the Group. It takes place roughly every 6 weeks on a Sunday evening.

For the past 2 years, Lent groups have been organised jointly for the 4 parishes in the Group. Previously, there were home groups within the parish, but these had tended to dwindle and closed altogether during the pandemic and we would like to rebuild them.

The church seeks actively to engage with the community. It produces a monthly magazine, “*The Barton Miller*”, which carries news of church and village activities and is delivered free to every home in the parish. A weekly coffee morning in the church rooms attracts about 25 regular

attendees (mostly elderly). The Preservation Charity Trust, which raises money to keep the fabric of the church in good order, organises a wide range of social activities. There is also an active Good Neighbour Scheme in the parish which, although not run by the church, includes many church members.

Freckenham – The Church and its Community

Freckenham is the smallest village in the Group, having only around 360 inhabitants. It is a rural community with a largely settled population and a strong agricultural bias. There is a pub/restaurant and a playing field and playground. The very active village hall is a thriving hub of rural arts, regularly putting on professional theatre or music productions and a monthly film night.

The 12th century church of St Andrew is Grade II* listed and in generally good order. Particular features are the interesting carved mediaeval pew ends. There is an open graveyard attached to the church where we have installed an outdoor, composting toilet.

We have paid our Parish Share in full for the last few years. The electoral roll stands at 12.



Tradition and stability are important to us and to our village. At the same time, we understand the need to make the gospel known to every generation. Therefore, although we hold fast to the BCP and to our beautiful old building, we are also open to trying newer forms of worship.

Our style of worship is "low Anglican", generally using the BCP. The present pattern of services is as follows ...

1st Sunday	9.30 am	BCP Holy Communion	(8 to 10)
2nd Sunday	9.30 am	Matins	(8 to 10)
3rd Sunday	9.30 am	Informal worship	(8 to 10)
4th Sunday	9.30 am	Matins	(8 to 10)
5th Sunday	Joint worship as arranged with the other 3 churches of the Group.		

One of our strengths is that the community has a real sense of ownership of the church. Although relatively few attend our weekly services, everyone turns out on special occasions. We host a Shoebox service every November to which other local churches bring their offerings for “*Operation Christmas Child*”. Until it was halted in 2020 by Covid-19, our annual flower festival attracted visitors from far and wide and we hope to re-launch it next year. Church members are fully engaged in the life of the village, with some serving on the Parish Council and on the Village Hall Committee. The church works as closely as possible with these bodies for the good of the community.

West Row – The Church and its Community

West Row is one of the larger villages in the Group, with a growing population of just under 1,900. It has a primary school, a general store, a cafe, a hairdresser, a pub, and a village hall and playground. There is also a well-attended Baptist church.

Statement of Individuality

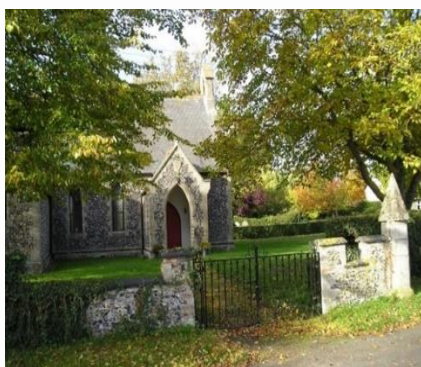
The church motto is “*Welcome, Warmth, Worship*” and the congregation aims to offer a friendly welcome to all. There is a strong emphasis on collaborative ministry that is not clergy-dependent, and the style of worship is relaxed, open and informal. We look upon ourselves as a family.

In April 2019, West Row became a separate parish, having formerly been part of the parish of Mildenhall. It is home to the Mildenhall Stadium which is used for speedway and other motor sports. The Mildenhall USAF airbase adjoins the village. Until the late 1800s, there was no Anglican church in the village and residents had to walk to Mildenhall to worship. In 1875, the village school moved to larger premises and the building became St Peter’s Church. In recent years, we have removed the pews and replaced them with chairs, creating a much more flexible space. There is an open graveyard at the back of the church and the grounds also house a small, ageing church hall. Discussions are ongoing as to whether to replace

the hall and/or to build a kitchenette at the back of the church.

The church hall is used for Parish Council meetings and by our lunch club and we have started a monthly women’s breakfast. We hold a barbeque after our St Peter’s Day celebration around 29th June. We also have an annual Harvest lunch, and we recently hosted a Burns Night supper. This level of hospitality means that we urgently need to consider how best to go forward with the building.

There is a bible study group that meets fortnightly and weekly during Lent. Prayer ministry is available after every Sunday service. Once a month we have a worship group to learn new hymns/songs and practice older ones that we will be singing in upcoming services.



The current pattern of our Sunday services is as follows, with the attendances in January 2023 shown in brackets...

1st Sunday	11:00 am	Sunday Celebration	(26)
2nd Sunday	11:00 am	CW Holy Communion	(24)
3rd Sunday	11:00 am	Sunday Celebration	(17)
4th Sunday	11:00 am	CW Holy Communion	(23)
5th Sunday	Joint worship as arranged with the other 3 churches of the Group.		

A Recent New Initiative

We are always ready to try new ideas, such as Messy Church at separate times, but our services are now more adaptable and informal, incorporating play for children within the service and refreshments afterwards. This approach reflects our belief that children are part of the church now, rather than the church of the future. Baptisms are also encouraged within the service. With the increased building in West Row, we hope to welcome more people into St Peter's.

In recent years, we have been privileged to be able to encourage and assist in the training of 2 ministers who were active members of St Peter's.

We have paid our Parish Share in full for the past 6 years and have sometimes made an additional contribution to support other parishes in the Deanery.

St Peter's is a "gathered" church and at least half the congregation comes from outside the village but, with the amount of new housing that has been added over the past few years, West Row has become a much younger community, and we would very much welcome new members.

Unfortunately, our links with the primary school, West Row Academy, have faltered because the new head teacher has not encouraged them and has even stopped visits by the "Open the Book" team. We hope that our new incumbent might be able to rebuild this relationship.

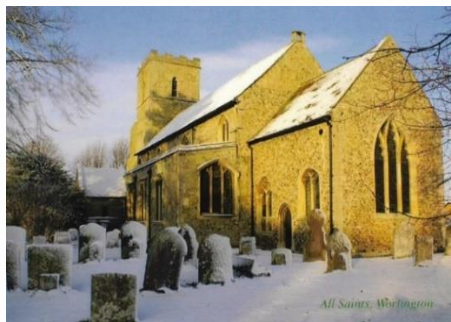
We very much look forward to the future and what it holds for us.

Worlington – The Church and its Community

Worlington is a small, rural community of about 675 residents. Amenities include a pub, a country house hotel, a golf course and a village hall. There is also a thriving cricket club. Worlington is home to a number of professional artists and to "The Worlington Movement", which is dedicated to keeping alive the techniques used by the old masters. One of the artists is a Lay Elder at the church and each year we host a show of their work which contributes to church funds. We work closely with the Parish Council and six times a year we produce a magazine called "The Pump" that is delivered to every household. We hold monthly coffee mornings which are the only free social gatherings to take place in the village.

We support other groups and organisations, such as the cricket club, whenever possible. Fund-raising events have included afternoon teas and quiz nights with fish and chip suppers. We have also held concerts and educational evenings with lectures on topics such as swifts and bats. Our Harvest Festival supports the local food bank and last December we were able to make a generous cash donation to them.

Due to a lack of facilities in the church, we are unable to host as many events as we would like. We have plans for the installation of a kitchen unit and toilet, but these are on hold at present.



All Saints' is Grade 1 listed and a church on the site is mentioned in the Domesday Book. Parts of the existing building date from the Norman era and we receive many visitors interested in our mediaeval graffiti. The tradition of the church is rather more formal than the other churches in the Group, but the congregation is friendly, open and willing to experiment. For two years we held Messy Church in the village hall.

The church is open every day during daylight hours. There is an open graveyard extension a short distance from the old churchyard.

The electoral roll stands at 32. Congregation numbers vary widely.

The current pattern of services is...

1st Sunday	11:00 am	CW Holy Communion
3rd Sunday	11:00 am	CW Holy Communion
5th Sunday	Joint worship as arranged with the other 3 churches of the Group.	

We enjoy the occasional choral evening with the Group Choir.

Statement of Individuality

We value our beautiful 13th century church and the important history it contains. However, we recognise the need to be relevant to the younger families and other newcomers to the village and to maintain our place at the heart of the community.

We are deeply committed to the CofE's Fifth Mark of Mission, which is to safeguard God's creation. This is reflected in our careful management of our old churchyard and our leading role in the Diocese's campaign to install nest boxes for swifts in churches and we now have one of the largest colonies in Suffolk.

A building that is over 700 years old inevitably needs regular maintenance, but we are not aware of any major outstanding issues. We have installed an alarm to safeguard the lead-covered section of the roof and electric heating under the pews.

We have always paid our Parish Share in full.

We would welcome a Vicar who is sensitive to our traditions, patient with our shortcomings and will help us to formulate an approach which will keep All Saints' relevant to the changing village demographic. Above all, we need someone who will lead us in faith and worship to share the love of God.

THE BRECKS GROUP

An Overview

The 6 parishes of the Brecks Group are Beck Row with Kenny Hill, Eriswell, Icklingham, Tuddenham with Cavenham, Herringswell and Red Lodge. They first came together as a Group in January 2014. They took the name of the adjoining area, which is known as “*Breckland*” or “*The Brecks*”, so as to give themselves a common sense of identity within the larger Forest Heath Team.

The Group is working well, although the number of worship services has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. The churches take turns on 5th Sundays to host joint Group services and they share other activities such as Lent courses and fund-raising events. Two of them, Cavenham and Herringswell, are now used primarily as Festival Churches.

The 6 parishes serve 7 villages in an arc to the north, east and south of Mildenhall, with a combined population of approximately 15,000. The largest of these villages is Red Lodge, which in barely 20 years has increased from a few hundred to over 6,300 and is continuing to grow. The US air base at RAF Mildenhall is a huge presence in the parish of Beck Row, as is RAF Lakenheath in Eriswell, and the economy of the whole area is closely linked to the fortunes of these bases. The latest position is that, in view of current world events, the bases are safe from closure for the time being, but this issue seems to be constantly under review by successive U.S. presidents.

The village church in Red Lodge is a shared Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Methodist Church. They own the church building but relations between the 2 denominations are very good. Red Lodge and to a lesser extent Beck Row also have links to the “Lightwave” project.

Since January 2019, the statistics for Occasional Offices have been –

Parish	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
St John's, Beck Row	8	9	25
St Laurence's, Eriswell	3	3 (and 1 blessing)	5
St Ethelbert's, Herringswell	4	2	3
St James's, Icklingham	0	0	7
St Christophers, Red Lodge	9	0	1
St Marys', Tuddenham	2	2	5
St Andrew's, Cavenham	2	1	0
Totals	28	17/1	46

Since February 2021, the Group has been led by a husband-and-wife team, the Revds David and Caroline Butcher, who are respectively the Team Vicar and Associate Priest. They enjoy the full support of one very engaged PTO priest and a Lay Elder. The Lightwave project is represented in this area by the Revd Diane Grano.

The Lightwave Rural Resourcing Hub

In 2019, a Rural Resourcing Hub was established in Red Lodge as part of the Diocesan-wide, Bishop's Mission Order known as "*the Lightwave Community*". It is now led by the Revd Diane Grano, assisted by 1 Licensed Pioneer and 1 Lay Elder. The focus is on promoting and enabling fresh expressions of Church in this area and making Jesus known to the unchurched and to people living on the margins. The project has been funded until 2025/26 by the Strategic Development Fund.

To date, the Hub's activities have centred primarily on Red Lodge and Beck Row. Examples have been...

- ✝ Setting up a Lightwave Café in Red Lodge which opens three days a week and offers different gateways for building relationships with people and addressing their varying needs.
- ✝ Collaborating closely with St Christopher's church in Red Lodge and with St John's and the Methodist churches in Beck Row.
- ✝ Reaching out, in partnership with St Christopher's, to the two primary schools in Red Lodge and, with "*Newmarket Youth for Christ*", to local secondary schools.
- ✝ Coordinating deliveries of food and medicine across 6 villages during lockdown and running a well-used foodbank.
- ✝ Supporting 6 other parishes with particular outreach events and/or mission consultancy.

The outcomes of the Hub's efforts have so far included establishing...

- ✝ 12 new adult discipleship groups which meet weekly and have an average attendance of 6.
- ✝ A discipleship group for children and young people with an average attendance of 40.
- ✝ Monthly Breakfast Chats ("*Let's talk about Jesus*") in Red Lodge and in Beck Row which attract an average of 60 adults and children.
- ✝ Messy Church sessions, run jointly with St Christopher's, which are attended by 50 children and adults each month.
- ✝ A Sunday evening Encounter worship with an average attendance of 20 adults.

The Hub has also...

- ✝ Hosted seasonal outreach events and holiday activities in Beck Row and Red Lodge, which have each attracted over 80 children and parents.
- ✝ Brought 5 adults to baptism and 7 to confirmation.

Going forward, Lightwave is looking to ensure the financial sustainability of this ministry beyond 2026. The next phase of development in Red Lodge will add 300 more houses at the northern edge of the village and the plans include the provision of a new, multi-use community facility. Negotiations are therefore underway for St Christopher's LEP to move out of the existing church building and to join with Lightwave in sharing a designated space in the new building. Lightwave's other specific aims are to create a worshipping community for children and young people from across the Forest Heath Team area and to expand its role in resourcing missional opportunities in the other parishes.

St Mary's Church

The market town of Mildenhall has a population of about 12,000 and the Church is at its centre. It is a very substantial, 800-year-old, Grade I listed building, attracting visitors from around the world to see the nationally renowned carved angels on the ceiling and the east window. It is open every day for visitors and prayer times are held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. There are emergency store boxes for people in need to take food and toiletries.

The main Sunday service is at 11.00am – led by the Team Vicar, the Revd Sue Leathley, or the Lay Reader, Andrew Borrett. The service is also recorded for Facebook and the local radio. The main service may be Holy Communion or Morning worship, plus all-age times with an informal style. There is a monthly, very informal, interactive afternoon service for families.

Since January 2022, there have been 5 baptisms (and 2 thanksgivings); 4 weddings (and 1 re-dedication); and 19 funerals have taken place at St. Mary's with another 3 at the crematorium. There are very good ecumenical links with the 4 other churches in the town.

Several activities have not resumed fully since the pandemic, and efforts are underway to rebuild them. Links with the 2 primary schools and secondary school were re-established during the "Amazing Angels" festival last Christmas. Class assemblies and visits, and Christmas and Easter trails have re-engaged children from St. Mary's C of E Academy.

Our mission statement is:
"Jesus is Lord. We seek to share His love and care".

The following is a summary of the most recent Growing in God plan.

Growing Deeper and Younger:

The parish aims to encourage faith and prayer by...

- ✝ Engaging with families and St Mary's Academy by using "Any Time, Any Place, Any Prayer" books and activities through the year.
- ✝ Focusing on a book of the Bible every month at the main service, with "give-aways" as reminders, and opportunities to share.
- ✝ Re-vamping the prayer area.

Growing in Number:

More visitors will be attracted to the church by ...

- ✝ Fitting a screen under the tower, which will create an enclosed room; and
- ✝ Installing improved heating in the adjoining Cottage Rooms and opening them as a warm space.

Growing in Influence:

The parish aims to engage with the wider community by ...

- ✝ Making more of the beauty of the church and churchyard.
- ✝ Celebrating the 600th anniversary of the angels on the ceiling of the nave which started with an "Amazing Angels" festival in Advent and will continue throughout the year.
- ✝ Following through existing Eco-projects and applying for the Gold Eco-Church award.
- ✝ Inviting the community to more events such as the Open Tower and Open Churchyard Day which took place over the Coronation weekend.

THE KENNETT VALLEY GROUP

An Overview

Prior to the formation of the Forest Heath Team Benefice in 2020, this Group of 5 small, rural parishes (Dalham, Gazeley, Higham Green, Kentford and Moulton) was known as the Dalham Benefice. It forms the southern portion of the Forest Heath Team area. The incumbent is the Revd Canon Chris Childs, who lives in the vicarage in Gazeley and has been here since January 2021. He is the Team Rector and also Rural Dean of the Mildenhall Deanery. In this Group he is assisted by a Curate, who has now completed his training, a retired priest and one Lay Elder.

An average of 9 Sunday services are held each month, in addition to the major festivals and occasional midweek services. All styles of worship are catered for, from the traditional to the more modern. Several times each year the churches come together for Group services which rotate between them and are greatly enhanced by the singing of the enthusiastic Group choir under the leadership of the talented organist, Philip Asher.

These parishes have a long tradition of close cooperation. Examples of collaborative working are...

- ✝ A Group Council consisting of the Ministry team and the Churchwardens and treasurers of each parish which meets at least twice a year to agree the Worship Diary and to discuss other topics of mutual interest.
- ✝ A weekly Group Newsletter.
- ✝ A Bible study group which meets every fortnight.
- ✝ An annual Lenten discussion group.
- ✝ Frequent fund-raising and social events which are always well supported by people from across the 5 parishes.
- ✝ A willingness to be mutually financially supportive, with the wealthier parishes helping the less well off.

They look forward to even closer co-operation, not only amongst themselves but also between them and the clergy and congregations of the other 11 parishes in the Forest Heath Team Benefice.

This part of the Benefice is particularly attractive and is criss-crossed by a number of scenic footpaths. The Icknield Way long distance trail passes through it and the churches in Dalham, Gazeley and Moulton make up "*The Three Churches Walk*" - a popular circular route which features in several guides.

Since January 2022, the statistics for Occasional Offices have been...

Parish	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals (in Church/Interment of Ashes)
St Mary's, Dalham	1	3	1
All Saints', Gazeley	3	1	6/3
St Stephen's, Higham	1	0	0
St Mary's, Kentford	3	0	1
St Peter's, Moulton	2	10	6/1
Totals	10	14	14/4