



# CONSTABLE COUNTRY CHURCHES

A NEW BENEFICE OF  
FOUR LOVELY SUFFOLK  
CHURCHES SEEKING TO  
GROW IN GOD

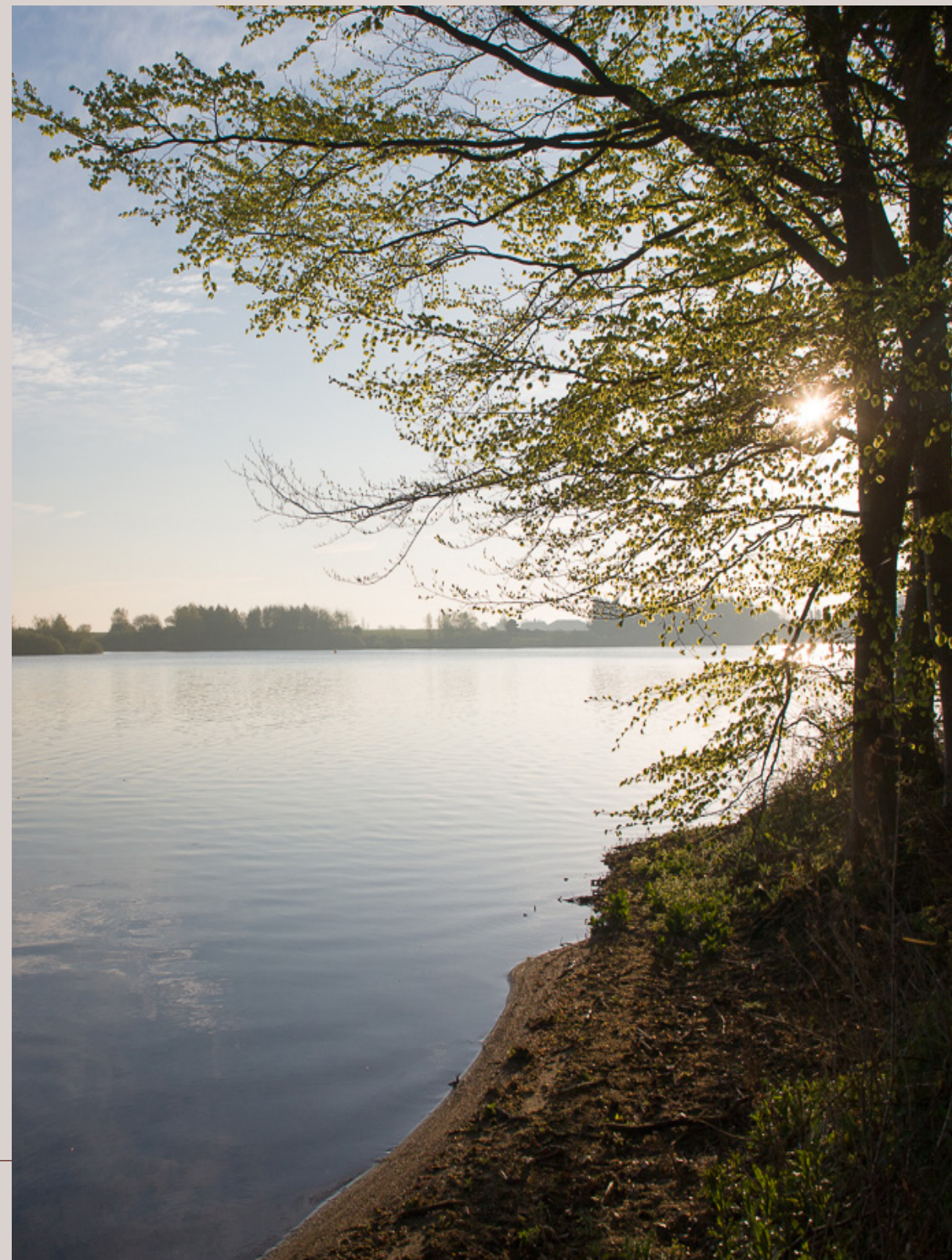
## **B E N E F I C E   P R O F I L E**



St Mary's East Bergholt, St Mary's Bentley,  
St Mary's Tattingstone and St Michael's Branham

# A NEW BENEFICE

WANTING TO GROW



ALTON WATER, TATTINGSTONE

**T**hank you so much for taking the time to look at our Benefice Profile. We are glad that you are considering us and will be praying for God's guidance for you and our parishes. Our aspiration is to grow deeper in faith and number. We also want to grow younger, grow in influence and to truly be Christ's body, active in our communities.

**O**ur Benefice is a new family of churches and we are excited that we will be able to live, learn, grow and have fun together. We are already learning to communicate, work and get on well. This is a very significant time for us and we are looking to see God wonderfully at work in our lives as individuals, in our benefice and in our parishes. We know if we work together and open ourselves to God that great things can and will happen. We want to see Jesus lifted high!

**W**e are looking for a leader who will walk with us on our journey of faith who will show and inspire us how to become more relevant and bring God's Holy Spirit to reshape our communities into the loving family God always intended us to be.

**W**e are a family of churches who want to work and grow deeper in faith and numbers together and serve our local communities so that God may be glorified, and others may come to know the love of Jesus.

**L**ocated in picturesque Constable Country, not far from the coast, between Colchester and Ipswich, with good links to London via the station at Manningtree or by road via the A12 and with equally good links north via the A14. We are a new grouping of four geographically close rural parishes who already have a strong history of working in partnership. Seeking to be actively involved in the local community, each of us has a lovely church building with good facilities or plans to obtain them.



**St Mary's  
East Bergholt  
CO7 6TG**

*page 8*



**St Mary's  
Bentley  
IP9 2DA**

*page 9*



**St Mary's  
Tattingstone  
IP9 2NA**

*page 10*



**St Michael's  
Brantham  
CO11 1PU**

*page 11*

WE ARE LOOKING TO SEE GOD

WONDERFULLY AT WORK IN OUR LIVES

# OUR TEAM AND WHAT WE OFFER

**A** new benefice and church family we may be, but we can offer an enthusiastic, committed team keen to support our new incumbent, and also ready to learn and grow and to develop stronger working links across the churches. A Benefice Council seems one possible way forward for the future. We also offer a highly skilled and hardworking Benefice Administrator and Church Treasurers who are very good at what they do.

**S**t Mary's East Bergholt and St Michael's Brantham have been a benefice for over twenty years and have a strong working relationship based on trust and a shared vision. At present, St Michael's and St Mary's are fortunate to have two retired PTO priests who currently take one service a month each and work across both churches as do our two Lay Readers. At Brantham there are five Lay Elders with two Elders at East Bergholt who each have identified roles and with some helping to lead services. A small and committed team plans and leads the monthly Family at Church events at East Bergholt and Brantham. There is also an active Mothers Union at East Bergholt.

**B**entley and Tattingstone have previously been part of the North Samford Benefice and also have a long history of working together. At Bentley, our retired PTO priest takes services in other benefice churches every month; two Lay Readers (both with PTO), take services in our present benefice. Two Lay Elders help and support various activities across our current benefice including toddler group and pastoral teas. All those above support our local community in a variety of ways including Home Communions and 'Open the Book' school assemblies.

**A**t Tattingstone, three Lay Elders provide a variety of support to Tattingstone and the Benefice as a whole, running Mother's Prayers on a weekly basis, Lightwave and Family and Evening Prayer services. They also provide support to members of the Parish and give Home Communion to those housebound. A Lightwave group, Spirit Lightwave, is led by a funded Outreach Pioneer (funding provided by the Lightwave Project at Diocesan level) and aim to bring "church" to those who do not access traditional church by making events accessible and open.





# OUR TEAM AND WHAT WE OFFER

**M**usic is very important in all of our churches. One of us has a robed choir led by a Director of Music and another a strong music group which plays regularly. We love to sing and enjoy traditional hymns alongside more modern worship styles. We can use worship videos or soundtracks as well. Yes, worship styles are slightly different across our churches but there is a willingness to be flexible and explore. Together we try to offer a menu of services that can meet the needs of all.

**W**e long to make our church buildings accessible and inclusive so that we can become more relevant and open. Not all are at the centre of their villages. St Mary's Bentley has good parking but most of us struggle somewhat here. Most of our churches have good modern facilities and there are exciting plans to further re-order St Mary's East Bergholt. St Mary's Bentley have recently completed an extensive project which makes the church building warm and welcoming. St Michael's has carried out a first stage of re-ordering and would love to remove its pews so that a more flexible and usable community space is created. Most of the churches have internet connections, and some have projectors and screens and livestream services. Several of us can record and broadcast baptisms, weddings and funerals. The pandemic inspired us all to strengthen our online presence through our websites and social media. We would like to learn how to use this technology better both to develop worship and to reach out.

**B**ecoming more inclusive and community focused is a deep-felt hunger. Members of the congregations are already active in local organisations like the bowls club, cricket club, U3A, village choirs, amateur dramatics and environmental groups where we hope our everyday faith will leak out. We participate in village garage sales, run local market stalls and have organised seniors' lunch clubs. We use our buildings for concerts and other events. The capacity to do more is an issue, but we are keen to experiment and are ready to take risks. It's said it can take a large container ship two miles and twenty minutes to turn round – changes in the Anglican church and, especially, rural churches can take longer and be more difficult. Yes, some of us will be worried about change and scared of the new, but if our new incumbent helps us develop the vision, and both leads from the front and is part of the team most of us will be on board. We want to grow in faith and numbers and will find the courage and the will to do so.



# A BEAUTIFUL PLACE TO LIVE

A FIVE BEDROOMED RECTORY WITH LARGE GARDENS AND VIEWS OVER THE RIVER STOUR

Built in 1932 and still replete with its servants' bells, our Benefice Rectory is located in Brantham, a short walk from St Michaels. An imposing house of five bedrooms (one is a box room), three reception rooms, kitchen and separate utility area and a walk-in pantry. It has a rooftop array of PV solar panels. With lovely views down to the river, there are large open gardens to the front and rear and is in an exceptionally peaceful place close to nature. (Don't panic, as our working group currently helps to maintain the gardens.)

There are scenic walks down to the Stour Estuary with the local school and shops being within walking distance. Further afield there are wonderful walks and places to visit and unwind in an area of outstanding beauty, the Shotley Peninsular and at the Suffolk and NE Essex Coast. The ports of Harwich and Felixstowe are a 30-minute drive and Stansted Airport just over an hour.



## **Our hopes for the future:**

- ⇒ **To grow – both younger, deeper and in influence. To work with children and their families and reaching out to the 'missing generations' of those in their 40's and 50's.**
- ⇒ **To be 'team' and work with and under the leadership of our incumbent who will help us explore and develop as God's people in our communities.**
- ⇒ **To be both challenged and inspired to get to know God better and to live meaningfully for him as individuals and as his family where we are.**
- ⇒ **To engage with the community, making a difference, and offering others an opportunity to see what our faith means in a practical way.**
- ⇒ **Continuing to recognise there are a variety of ways of learning about our faith and variety in worship that are pathways to growth.**
- ⇒ **To see our attractive church buildings become more flexible and more usable for community events.**
- ⇒ **To explore ways of reaching out into the villages as some grow exponentially with many new houses being built.**
- ⇒ **Developing our online ministry and use of technology.**

## **We are praying for someone who:**

- ⇒ **Is a person of deep Christian faith, loves to worship, and who can help us to understand and grow in faith.**
- ⇒ **Has a good sense of fun, communicates well, is a good listener, open minded, flexible and resilient.**
- ⇒ **Who tells the story of God from the Bible and makes it relevant to our communities.**
- ⇒ **Will help us develop a clear vision for the future and who is both a great team leader and a team player so that by empowering us, together, we can glorify God and reach out to others.**
- ⇒ **Someone who will put children first, helping us to engage with families in the community whilst at the same time helping us continue our support of the older members of the local community.**
- ⇒ **A person who appreciates both the contemporary and the traditional, who can help us discern what to preserve and what to leave behind and is confident to facilitate change.**
- ⇒ **A person who is collaborative by nature and who is eager to work with all the gifts God has already given us, developing 'every member ministry'.**

# ST MARY'S, EAST BERGHOLT



St Mary's, East Bergholt is a large Grade 1 listed wool church in the village centre, with a unique bellcage. Many tourists visit on account of the association with John Constable, who was born in the village, and had strong connections with the church. We are also on many official tour guide itineraries. We have an electoral roll of 122, with church attendance ranging from 10-15 at 8am BCP Holy Communion to 30-40 at our 10am services and 20-30 coming to Family@Church on a Sunday afternoon.

Our loyal (but ageing) congregation supports several different types of services. However, we also have a growing number of younger families regularly attending our monthly family@church services on Sunday afternoons which feeds from our thriving Baby and Toddlers group and encouraged by the church-led school assemblies. St Mary's has a Director of Music/organist, who plays at all main services, and a robed choir for holy communion as well as special musical services in Holy Week and carols at Christmas. Our children Christmas Eve afternoon services are very well supported by the whole village.

We enjoy strong links with the voluntary controlled church primary school. As well as taking weekly school assemblies and Open the Book sessions, the school holds its end of term services in church and at Harvest. The local high school and the pre-school provider, Constable Country Childcare, also use the church at Christmas for their carol service and Nativities.

We have a YouTube channel and the ability to livestream and record services: [www.youtube.com/@stmaryseastbergholt2137](http://www.youtube.com/@stmaryseastbergholt2137) We also actively use our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/stmaryseastbergholt](http://www.facebook.com/stmaryseastbergholt) and our benefice website: [www.constablecountrychurches.co.uk/](http://www.constablecountrychurches.co.uk/) links across to our 'A Church Near You' page: [www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2067/](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2067/) There is a link to learn more about our bell cage: [www.constablecountrychurches.co.uk/bells-and-bell-cage](http://www.constablecountrychurches.co.uk/bells-and-bell-cage) We have also embraced card readers in church and QR codes to support online donations.

St Mary's is frequently used for concerts and talks, and over the years we have organised very successful themed flower festivals, as well as an art exhibition, all of which have attracted hundreds of visitors. Links with the local community are strong. The church produces a monthly parish magazine that is delivered to every household free of charge, which includes regular articles about what's going on in every faith's church and in the village as a whole, plus useful contact telephone numbers. It is funded by local business advertisements see [www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2067/page/56964/view/](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2067/page/56964/view/) Village groups, societies and organisations are actively involved in the life of the church. We have worked collaboratively to organise a Christmas Parade and Market, which is now in its third year, and offer a Pantry in the Porch to help with the Cost of Living crisis.

East Bergholt has a population of just over 2700 but with two new major housing developments just starting, this will likely increase by approximately another 600 in the next few years. The village has a lively sense of community and boasts MU, WI, U3A, Stour Valley Arts and Music Society, Drama and Ballet groups, village cinema and Sports Council including very active cricket, tennis, football and bowls teams.







# ST MARY'S, BENTLEY

The Parish of Bentley lies in beautiful, wooded countryside on the edge of the Dedham Vale and the Shotley Peninsula. The population of the village is approximately 830, growing due to infill housing development. The village prides itself on being a supportive community.

The Parochial Church Council consists of eleven members, all actively involved in running the church and developing and spreading the Christian message. Rotas ensure a “whole body” ministry with the congregation involved and engaged, with a ministry team of six, one LOM, two readers and three elders. A minimum of four services a month are held throughout the year at 10am on a Sunday morning. We publish an annual church diary setting out the various services and outreach activities and also a bi-monthly Bentley Community and Church News, “The Bugle”. Both the diary and Bugle are delivered to every home in Bentley.

Our PCC have spent in excess of £175,000 on alterations and repairs creating a welcoming environment with modern facilities. This has been achieved by generous donations from individual supporters of the church, fundraising by the PCC, charitable grants and The Friends of Bentley Church. The pews were removed from the north aisle and replaced with a carpeted area which facilitates the coffee and cake ministry after each service. This flexible space is useful for our Harvest lunches, art exhibitions, meetings and other church events that take place throughout the year.

The environment is very important to us in Bentley and, working in partnership with the school we have achieved a Bronze and Silver Eco award and are now working towards achieving Gold. We have an electoral roll of 27 members with church service attendance averaging around 34.

Bentley Church of England Voluntary controlled Primary School and St Mary's have forged strong links. The Christian life being important to the school ethos. Two PCC members are Governors, and together with other PCC members regularly spend time at the school joining in with assemblies, library, Open the Book and worship group, supporting both staff and pupils in any way we can. Important dates in the school calendar are celebrated at St Mary's, including Easter, Harvest and Christmas. The school has a worship team, made up of all ages. They produce and run many of the excellent services at school and Church. The school has also designed and made an altar frontal for their regular services. The motto is 'I am with you always'. At the end of the summer term a Leavers' service is held in the church for pupils moving up to senior school at East Bergholt.

Bentley Village Hall is well used and offers a wide variety of clubs and activities for young and old. Bentley also has a children's play area, sports field with outdoor gym facilities and a bowls green. A great community spirit is evident with a warm welcome at the church, community run shop and pub.

Helpful Websites: The Bentley Bugle » Bentley Parish Council ([onesuffolk.net](http://onesuffolk.net)) [www.facebook.com/groups/292599697915731/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/292599697915731/)  
[www.thecasepubbentley.co.uk](http://www.thecasepubbentley.co.uk) [www.facebook.com/theCaseBentley](https://www.facebook.com/theCaseBentley) [www.bentleycopdock.co.uk](http://www.bentleycopdock.co.uk) [www.bentleystores.co.uk](http://www.bentleystores.co.uk)  
[www.achurchnearyou.com/church/1897](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/1897) [www.babergh.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-planning-in-babergh/bentley-neighbourhood-plan/](http://www.babergh.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-planning-in-babergh/bentley-neighbourhood-plan/)



# ST MARY'S, TATTINGSTONE



St Mary's Church is a beautiful building in the centre of the small village of Tattingstone, which lies south east of Ipswich and just north of the county border between Essex and Suffolk. Tattingstone is home to Alton Water Reservoir with many walkers and cyclists visiting regularly, as well as fishermen. The reservoir is surrounded by woodland walks with a host of flora and fauna. There is a multitude of wildlife in the churchyard and Swift boxes were erected on the tower in 2018. Six varieties of protected bats roost in the tower.

At the present time we hold a monthly communion service with an attendance average of 20 and a Family Service with between 30-40 attending. The Christmas Eve Crib Service was well supported with around more than 150 people. The churchyard is used for outdoor services on Remembrance Sunday, as well as Easter egg hunts and school events. We have an active bell ringing team who regularly meet also supporting other local towers.

Tattingstone Voluntary Controlled Primary School is situated next to St Mary's Church with strong links between the church and the school. Two PCC members are school governors and actively work within the school to enhance the word of God. The school regularly use the church (end of term, Epiphany, Christmas), and the school children display their pictures and prayers in the church. The school feeds into the two local high schools (Holbrook and East Bergholt) with transport provided.

A Lightwave group, Spirit Lightwave, is led by a funded Outreach Pioneer (funding provided by the Lightwave Project at Diocesan level) and aim to bring "church" to those who do not access traditional church by making events accessible and open.

We are all working hard to promote and improve St Mary's Church and are actively in the process of improving facilities with the installation of a toilet and kitchenette; a small working party are currently moving forward with this project.

We enjoy all types of worship including traditional, informal and family services, as well as the occasional Taize and BCP evening prayer. A local choir and music group are welcomed into the Church at various services. We have an electoral roll of 36 members.

We are looking for someone who is inspirational and who will take us forward in our faith and spiritual journey bringing new life in worship by encouraging our community, so that our church is not just a building but a dynamic witness to a life of worship, prayer and support.





# ST MICHAEL'S, BRANTHAM

**W**e are a well-established church family which is friendly and welcoming. No one rushes off after a service and spending time over refreshments is much valued as are other social events. Probably, we are best described as a 'relaxed' Anglican church and enjoy our current combination of traditional and more informal, relaxed family services. Our congregation are flexible and happy to join in with discussion or other activities during a service. Twice a month worship is supported by our Music Group.

**O**ur Sunday Morning Service tends to consist of an older congregation of between 25-40 people, but we have a well-established foothold in the local primary school, good relations with the youth organisations and the nearby Constable Country Childcare provision uses our church regularly. 'Family at Church', a successful recent venture, meets monthly on a Sunday afternoon and attracts people who might not normally come to church, around 15-20. Lent Groups and other Study Groups run from time to time.

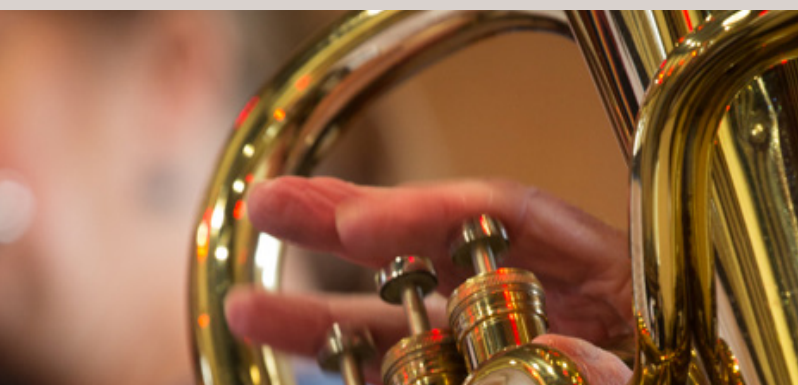
**R**ecent facilities include a modern kitchen and disabled toilet. A small modern altar has been brought forward into the nave on a raised platform. We have a cunningly concealed screen and overhead projector with digital sound system and hearing loop. We installed Mobile 4G Wi-Fi in 2021 and fitted live streaming cameras in 2022.

**A**surprising but delightful development that came out of the pandemic has been the ministry that has evolved through our online presence. Our 'Worship and Support' WhatsApp Group has become a key tool for sharing prayers, insights, readings and uplifting (or funny) moments. Our YouTube Channel receives on average around 30 views for each Sunday service, but special events sometimes get hundreds of views.

**W**e currently have an electoral roll of 63. St Michael's PCC is lively and engaged and puts together ad hoc working groups to organise social and fundraising activities. A small group of volunteers, 'Tuesday Group', undertake church cleaning and maintenance and manage the churchyards as well as helping to maintain the large Rectory Garden.

**S**t Michael's Church holds about 250 and is on a site where there has been a church for 1,000 years. It is not near the centre of the village so we work hard at keeping ourselves visible. The oldest surviving parts are 14th Century. It was modernised by the Victorians and has some lovely Arts & Crafts features. The Village War Memorial sits in the upper churchyard.

**B**rantham itself is a large village with a population of 2,600. It is close to the River Stour and offers great walks as does the nearby Dedham Valley. Farming was the traditional industry, but the village also has a long industrial history as it became the site of the Xylonite Plastics Factory in 1887 and played a key role in both World Wars producing vital materials. Housing to accommodate incoming workers for the factory was built in the late 19th century, followed by more in the 1960's and 70's. Hundreds more homes are currently being built in the village. We have some social housing and about a fifth of the villagers are over 70. The village boasts a small parade of shops including a Co-op. Brantham Leisure Centre is a flourishing centre for several sports. Although historically a working-class village, the nearby railway station has made it popular for commuters to London as has its proximity to the small town at Manningtree and the range of shopping, medical services, pubs & eateries.



<b>Our present service patterns</b>	<b>St Mary's East Bergholt</b>	<b>St Mary's Bentley</b>	<b>St Mary's Tattingstone</b>	<b>St Michael's Brantham</b>
<b>First Sunday</b>	Communion Family@Church	Communion	Occasional Family Services but not on a regular Sunday	Relaxed Informal Service
<b>Second Sunday</b>	Relaxed Informal Service	Family Service	Communion	Communion
<b>Third Sunday</b>	Communion	Communion		Relaxed Informal Service  Family at Church
<b>Fourth Sunday</b>	BCP Communion Relaxed Informal Service	Morning Prayer	Evensong	Communion
<b>Fifth Sunday</b>	We usually have a joint service at one of our churches			



The diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich strongly encourages all incumbents to promote the growth of small missional groups and fresh expressions of Church in their benefices. “Lightwave” has been created with a diocese-wide Bishops Mission Order in order to support clergy and lay people to work together in mission-shaped communities, reaching out in innovative ways

The Lightwave Community meets in small groups in homes, pubs, offices, schools and other places and complements other ways of being church. The name of the community comes from the idea of lightwaves 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.

Each Lightwave group aims to do one activity together to bless their local community and to share faith in their locality or network. Each group receives support and training in their outreach through a growing network of coaches. Each is mainly concerned to bless people who are exploring faith for the first time, while simultaneously cooperating closely with local parish churches and others. The Lightwave Community is being developed through a Project called “Growing in God in the Countryside” funded by the Strategic Development Unit of the Church Commissioners until 2025. While both urban and rural Christians are part of this community, there is a particular focus on helping 1500 new disciples come to faith in rural areas in the period of the funding. Many Lightwave groups are planting fresh expressions of Church. The understanding is that such fresh expressions of Church will be new or different ways of being established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

The Lightwave Community is developing three Rural Resourcing Churches, in different parts of Rural Suffolk to create and support the development of the small missional groups in their area and to intentionally provide sufficient critical mass for particular ministries which are currently under-represented in rural churches, for example with young adults and those in lower income brackets. Every part of the Lightwave Community has a vision for the great wave of God’s love, bringing light to our county.



Loverural – is about “making Jesus visible through loving action” in the Suffolk Countryside. It is part of the diocese’s strong commitment to rural areas. Loverural has 3 strands:-

- a) Drawing attention to the enormous role of the rural Christianity in building social capital
- b) Acting as a convenor for projects and congregations in the countryside including those of of different streams and denominations so that good rural practice can be shared and mutual support offered

c) Enabling those engaged in Christian-based social action to gain confidence and wisdom in how to make exploration of the Christian faith accessible to those engaging with their initiatives.

[www.light-wave.org](http://www.light-wave.org)

## **The Samford Deanery** - *A message from the Rural Dean*

Samford Deanery is a small Deanery comprising five benefices and a total of nineteen parishes.

The new composition of this benefice is part of a wider reorganisation which we hope will aid finance and mission, we feel that this is an exciting opportunity for interested candidates with plenty of scope for mission and development.

Historically, the deanery was designated as a group, at that time, to be able to appoint a part time deanery training officer. Today it means that we can be a little more inventive about how we work together. As ordained and lay people, we seek to attend to the needs of our deanery and develop mission in an organic way, open our varied benefice activities to each other and organise a yearly deanery marriage preparation day, and deanery confirmations in conjunction with the Royal Hospital School amongst other things.

We have written a new deanery plan in the context of Growing in God, the Diocesan growth strategy. This is a living document which will be updated regularly.

Chapter is made up of the incumbents in the deanery. We are committed to active participation at our monthly meetings and mutual support. Deanery synod meets three times per year and is seen as a seedbed for mission. Speakers are invited to our meetings to share their expertise in the context of mission and inspire members to reflect on the subject at hand for their own parish or benefice context. Synod welcomes all who are interested in the subject of the evening regardless of whether they are parish representatives.

As a deanery we are excited to find out about the gifts and talents you will bring to enrich our collective mission and ministry.

Brian C Rogerson, Lay Chair

Revd Jenny Seggar, Rural Dean

# 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 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. This focusses on nurturing and discipling new Christians through small Lightwave groups and hubs such as the one being established at Bungay. (The Growing in God in the Countryside project plan is available among the documents at [www.light-wave.org/vacancies](http://www.light-wave.org/vacancies))

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 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 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'.**