



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich

BENEFICE PROFILE FOR STOKE-BY-NAYLAND WITH LEAVENHEATH & POLSTEAD AND NAYLAND WITH WISSINGTON



Stoke-by-Nayland



Leavenheath



Polstead



Nayland



Wissington

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WELCOME TO OUR BENEFICE

Thank you so much for taking the time to read through our Benefice profile. We trust that as you seek to discern if God is calling you to join us in ministry, teaching and leadership, you will see something of our character as church families and sense our fervent desire to honour God in our worship, to understand more deeply our faith in God, through Jesus Christ and to share the Good News of God's love in our communities.

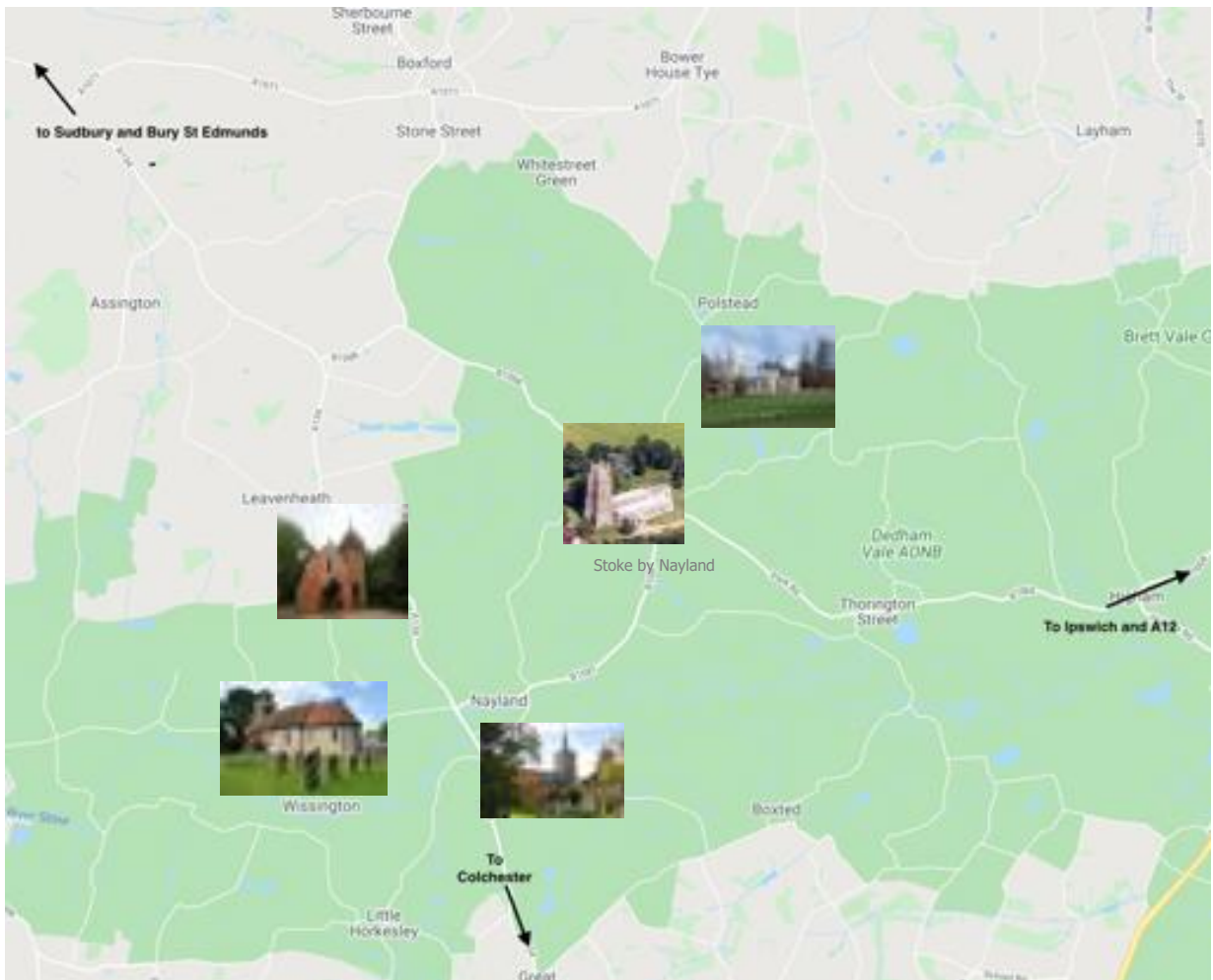
In both praying and preparing for this, we have sought to produce a document which is honest about where we are as a Benefice and direct about what we need and what we can give to the new incumbent.

We are praying for every applicant, that you will be assured in your guiding and that this document helps you in the process.

Our Prayer during this Interregnum:

Dear Lord, call to churches a true Shepherd, a man or woman of God,
a minister of Christ, and make us, with him or her,
a church joyful in worship and united in witness working,
caring praising, loving, to the glory of your Name,
through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

MAP OF THE BENEFICE CHURCHES AND WIDER AREA



PERSONAL QUALITIES

WHAT KIND OF PRIEST ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We are hoping for a rector who will work with us to build on all that we have accomplished over the last five years, encouraging the strengths we have discovered and helping us respond to the challenges.

The village population is spread across a broad range of ages whilst the congregation tends to be on the mature side. This requires a new incumbent's vision to enable us to encourage an influx of the younger generations. We need locally based mission to reach the whole community, e.g. Family Service workshops and workshops for the major festivals all enhance participation and attendance at the associated services.

The list that follows highlights many of the areas of need which we have identified and what we hope for in a new rector. Whilst it may seem exhaustive, above all, we really hope that our next incumbent will feel comfortable being him/herself and ready to share his/her gifts with us all.

We are looking for a new rector who would be:

- comfortable with their own spirituality and ready to enrich and enable others in their own journey and ministry
- confident in being a visible presence in diverse rural communities
- ready to share in our current styles of worship and to bring his/her own experience to enrich our communities
- enthused by people of all ages, encouraging the young and old alike
- excited by connections to the wider community, especially links to schools, care homes and other organisations
- prepared to work ecumenically and build on strong links with other denominations
- able to coordinate, enable and challenge with a balance of sensitivity and humour
- able to engage with our mission and ministry in the light of Growing in God and connected to our context

SO, WHAT WE CAN OFFER OUR NEW PRIEST?

We are very mindful that each of our church communities is about people. Our loyal and faithful congregations know how valuable it is to be welcoming, caring and sociable.

We are a strong and committed team who see the current vacancy as a time of opportunity to further “Growing in God”.

We have a sound infrastructure of five historic churches.

These churches are maintained to a very high standard by a team of nine Churchwardens and their excellent PCCs.

You will be joining an active, well supported community with many events in aid of the churches which involve the villages as a whole.

There is a growing core of parishioners who are very happy to worship in other churches in the Benefice as well as their village events. We offer:

- A group of parishes growing stronger in co-operation and shared purpose
- Support of priest’s spiritual wellbeing and spiritual network
- Committed, prayerful and reflective congregations
- Our support through a dedicated and active lay ministry team of 11
- Strong communities with the church at the heart of each village
- Every parish has their own individual “Friends” raising funds for the fabric of the church
- Administrative assistance
- A wish to sustain you and respect your family and personal life
- Attractive five bedroomed house, outstanding local schools, easy access to London and Cambridge, and the glorious Suffolk countryside

NAYLAND RECTORY

The rectory stands in its own substantial garden away from the village centre. It is situated above the primary school and next to the Nayland Care Home and the cemetery which is run by the Parish Council.

The ground floor comprises a side-entrance porch, a sizeable kitchen which leads into the hallway off which is a good-sized study, a large sitting room with an open fire and two sets of French doors, a separate dining room or sitting room and cloakroom/shower room. The study, which is well shelved, can also be accessed via the main front door and kept separate from the main house.

Upstairs there are five bedrooms of various sizes (two with basins), all carpeted and most with built-in cupboards. There is a bathroom with shower over the bath and a separate WC.

The main south-facing garden is laid to lawn at the front of the house. The back of the house is also lawned with a wooded area to the side and the back. There is a garage and a garden shed.

The property is served with oil central heating and has the benefit of solar panels, allowing the use of free electricity when generated during the day. The house is connected to mains drainage.



A BENEFICE OVERVIEW

The Benefice lies in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), close to the A12 and A14, with good road links to Ipswich (15 miles), Bury St Edmunds (26 miles), Colchester (8 miles), and main line train with direct links to London, Ipswich and Norwich. Many residents commute to London, or work in the local towns of Ipswich, Sudbury (9 miles), Hadleigh (7 miles) and Colchester. There is still a strong agricultural presence in the area.

The Benefice is rural in setting and consists of five villages with their own parish churches. Each village retains its own character and the churches consist of four Grade 1 listed buildings, and a former chapel of ease built in 1835. Further details are in the parish profiles.

There are three schools in the Benefice: A Church of England primary in Stoke by Nayland, a community primary school in Nayland, and a privately run Focus School, which shares close links with The Plymouth Brethren Christian Church.

There is also an independent preparatory school, Littlegarth, which lays just outside the Benefice boundary. Pupils usually transfer to secondary schools in Great Cornard, Hadleigh, Sudbury and Colchester or to independent schools in Ipswich or Colchester and beyond.

There are village shops in Nayland and Stoke and a community shop in Polstead. A doctors' surgery in Nayland, and a well-respected Golf Club & Hotel in Stoke. Further afield but within easy travelling distance is the well-known Snape Maltings, picturesque village of Lavenham, Flatford Mill (home to John Constable) to name but a few and the beautiful Suffolk coastline.

We also have a residential care home in Nayland. It is situated close to the rectory. The Benefice has excellent links with the residents and staff providing caring, pastoral and spiritual support.

The last five years has seen the formal joining of the two Benefices and much energy has been spent in ensuring good working relationships, mutual sharing of resources and worship. We are looking to continue building on this foundation of trust and cooperation.

We work together as a Benefice in a number of ways; sharing Benefice services on 5th Sundays and special occasions; sharing Messy Church and Holiday Clubs; and sharing information with the wider community through the two local magazines, (the 'LSPN' (**L**eavenheath **S**toke **P**olstead **N**ayland)) and the Nayland with Wissington Community Times). We also have a Benefice website, Twitter and Facebook pages.

In conclusion, the Benefice is nestled in a very special part of Suffolk to which we look forward to welcoming you. Further link: <https://www.visitsuffolk.com/explore/constable-country.aspx>

SAFEGUARDING IN THE BENEFICE

We have a Benefice Safeguarding Officer, Jane Addis, and each parish church has its own point of contact. Jane organises training and keeps the Benefice data up-to-date on safeguarding news and issues. She is also safeguarding trainer for the Deanery (current system under review) and an authorised overseer of documents for DBS certificates.

All parishes have adopted the C of E safeguarding protocol, and should have safeguarding on their PCC agendas.

THE HADLEIGH DEANERY

The five parishes that make up this Benefice sit at the Essex border with Suffolk, geographically almost a quarter of the Hadleigh Deanery.

Hadleigh Deanery consists of 22 parishes with 21 churches and a total population nearing 22,000. The area is mainly rural with the growing market town of Hadleigh, accounting for up to half the population. However, each community, no matter how large or small in number, has a strong sense of identity.

The five Benefices within the Deanery have a total of five incumbent clergy, two on reduced stipend and three on full stipend, all of whom have been appointed in the last two years. The chapter meets monthly for encouragement and supportive advice. The Diocese and the Deanery encourage the roles of reader and elder, as well as a host of other lay ministries that offer support and missional possibilities.

Recently the Deanery Plan was agreed and approved and, based around the Diocese “Growing in God”, highlights many of the aspirations of the Deanery and each Benefice. The recent past has seen a stronger link between and within Benefices, with a good deal of sharing of ideas and resources.

Financially the Deanery is very sound and has worked hard to ensure that, over recent years, it has achieved as near to full payment of the Deanery Share as possible. However, the recent pandemic and ageing congregations may prove a challenge to the future financial stability. Likewise, there is much goodwill towards the churches and they are often still seen as a focal point of the community.

We welcome a new colleague and hope that whoever is appointed knows that they will find a welcoming chapter, a strong Deanery Team and encouragement and support.

The Very Rev Jo Delfgou, Rural Dean



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

Where are we?

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

Who are we?

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

What is our vision?

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

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

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

As part of this vision, we have recently received Strategic Development Funding for two major projects: Inspiring Ipswich, overseen by the Archdeacon of Ipswich which aims to grow the church in Ipswich through church planting and reaching out to those who live in the town, and 'Growing God in the Countryside', overseen by the Archdeacon for Rural Mission, which focuses on developing Rural Resourcing Churches and nurturing and discipling new Christians through small Lightwave groups. We have also been part of a pilot scheme exploring how we can use our church buildings more creatively both for those who worship regularly and for the benefit of our communities and many churches have benefitted from this.

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

How can we do this?

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

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

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

So, in summary:

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

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

To find out more, visit www.cofesuffolk.org

THE FIVE PARISHES

NAME OF CHURCH: ST MARY'S, STOKE-BY-NAYLAND

LOCATION: The church is prominently placed on a hill and lies centrally within the village, in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

COMMUNITY:

Mainly owner-occupied houses, some social, some privately rented. Also, five alms houses run by the Lady Anne Windsor charity.

One C of E Primary School and Nursery, part of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust; a OneGroup School linked to the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church and a shop & post office combined. Two pub/restaurants with accommodation and golf club with hotel. Garage/car dealership with filling station. Village hall with good facilities (incl. monthly community lunch and popular pre-Christmas lunch). Volunteer-run "We'll Help" transport system for those having difficulty reaching doctors surgeries, hospitals, opticians etc. Small bookshop selling mainly second-hand books. Hugely appreciated Community Woodland in corner of village. Large recreation ground adjacent to church building with tennis court and children's play equipment; also outdoor exercise equipment for use of adult community. A beautiful cricket ground. Diverse occupations within community – some commute daily to London, some retired, some locally employed etc.

CHURCH BUILDING

Grade One listed.

SPECIAL FEATURES

An outstanding building containing many special features. The acoustics are splendid and therefore it is used for concerts of a very high standard and also for recordings by a renowned recording studio. There is an organ in good condition; a grand piano; a sound system and Wi-Fi. A biennial art exhibition is held. There is seating for over 350 people. There are toilets and basic kitchen facilities. Two well-furnished side chapels are in frequent use and a special Godly Play area. Open daily. Open churchyard. Good parking facilities.

CHURCHMANSHIP

Best described as central. Messy Church for the Benefice meets regularly.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The parish is viable and the church has an excellent record of paying the parish share every year.

STRENGTHS

There are three elders in the parish.

The Friends of St Mary attend to the maintenance of the fabric.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISSION AND WORSHIP

St Mary's is a large, well-equipped building at the heart of the community and Benefice.

We encourage use of the building, and would welcome use by other denominations.

St Mary's



Hosting a social gathering



Stoke-by-Nayland C of E Primary School leading the process



NAME OF CHURCH: **ST MARY'S POLSTEAD**

LOCATION: The church lies on the western edge of the village

COMMUNITY

The parish of Polstead is situated in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The main village is centered around Polstead Green and the Hill, although Polstead also comprises several outlying hamlets. The housing is mainly owner occupier, with some social and affordable houses.

The village boasts:

- A well-stocked village shop, volunteer led and Post Office, open 6 days a week
- Modern Village Hall which hosts a variety of community-focused activities.
- A village pub/restaurant situated on the picturesque village green and another pub/restaurant at Bower House Tye
- A caravan and camping site. Playground and a playing field
- For further details please see: <http://polstead.onesuffolk.net/about-polstead/>

CHURCH BUILDING

St Mary's Church, Polstead, is a Grade 1 listed medieval church in a superb natural setting, overlooking parkland and the Box valley towards Stoke by Nayland. It is a haven of peace and calm appreciated by many. The church is open daily, has an open well- kept churchyard and has toilet and refreshment facilities.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The building incorporates Norman and Anglo-Saxon stonework, including what are possibly the oldest English bricks in the country. The site goes back to St Cedd's legendary preaching under the Gospel Oak, in the grounds of Polstead Hall, circa AD 653. It has a Norman brick-arched nave, famous Norman stone arch in the tower and a unique medieval stone spire.

CHURCHMANSHIP

Worship at St Mary's is best described as central Anglican. A "family @ Polstead" monthly lay-led service has proved very popular with all ages. Attendance at all services is generally good.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Sound finances: Parish Share paid in full with modest annual surpluses; fabric in good condition with strong financial support from the "Friends of Polstead Church".

STRENGTHS

Two experienced lay elders, a dedicated pastoral visitor and supporting team of varied help with all services of worship. A talented music group plays regularly at services. Welcoming atmosphere for both young and old. We are blessed with a supportive, generous community which helps in different ways i.e. bell ringing, cleaning, fundraising, flower arranging, locking and unlocking etc.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISSION AND WORSHIP

St Mary's is a welcoming church embracing all ages. Parents with young children in the congregation provide opportunities to bring friends and supporters to worship and church special events. Messy Church (in Stoke) extends Benefice-wide appeal to parents with very young children. A Women's Fellowship Group, a Prayer Group and strong support for traditional festivals, showing a high level of underlying goodwill in the community.

A joyous service at St Mary's and Pauline Hatch, Lay Elder, working with our young



St Mary's in summer



Baptism time for a church family



NAME OF CHURCH: ST JAMES CHURCH, NAYLAND

LOCATION: The church lies in the centre of Nayland

COMMUNITY

Nayland village has a doctors' surgery, one general shop, butcher, post office, pub, hairdresser, dentist, motor vehicle engineers, primary school with nearby playground, fire station, village hall and playing field, church hall. The village has a very active social life, with clubs and associations including Nayland Players, Nayland Choir, Nayland Horticultural Society, Nayland-with-Wissington Conservation Society, WI, Royal British Legion. The local Community Council maintains a website on which the Nayland-with-Wissington Community Times can be seen and the church contributes to this. This is also delivered to all households in the parish. A second publication, The LSPN newsletter, is delivered to Nayland, Stoke by Nayland, Leavenheath and Polstead and church information is disseminated in this way also.

Housing is mainly owner-occupied, with a few social and affordable houses and some second homes. The parish incorporates two commercial areas providing some seven small units. An interior design consultancy is situated in the centre of the village.

Nayland has its own cemetery, managed by the local authority.

CHURCH BUILDING

Grade I listed. c1400. The church is open daily. The church is in a good state of repair, major works having been undertaken following the last Quinquennial inspection. The church currently seats about 250. Plans are under discussion in respect of modifying the interior layout of the church to make it more easily accessible and to enhance its use for functions outside traditional services. Special features of the church include an original John Constable Altarpiece and the historic William Jones organ.

WORSHIP

Traditional Eucharistic worship has formed the basis of our services which are currently wide ranging, including a less formal family service. St James maintains a strong musical tradition, has a small robed choir and organist and is affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music. Our joint Benefice of the five parishes maintains its own website, with links to the wider diocesan and national church. The church recognises the importance and power of social media in communicating to the wider community.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Relatively strong at present and up to date with paying the parish share. In the accounts, provision has also been made for the expenses of a youth worker with a view to increased activity with the young in the village in the near future.

PARISH STRENGTHS:

In this assessment the PCC has considered the following strengths and weaknesses.

STRONG LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY:

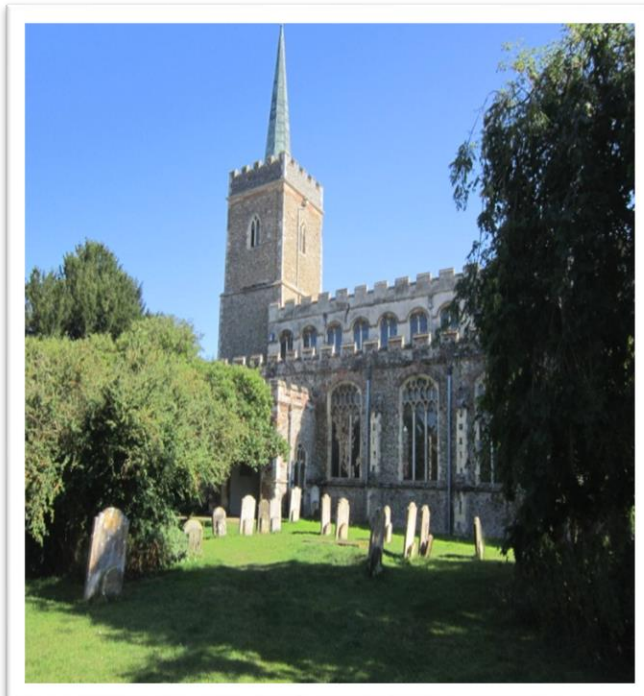
There is a strong intermingling between the church and the local community. These links have been orchestrated and led by the former incumbents and members of the PCC, for example by being a governor of the local county primary school, participating in the community council and actively working on many of the village organisations – e.g. the Village Choir, The Dramatic society, The WI, The Conservation Society. This example is followed by others in the church community.

MISSION AND WORSHIP:

We offer a wide range of service types. We take the church into the community e.g. Home Communion, Songs of Praise, Pastoral visits, School Assemblies at the primary school and the local independent school just outside the geographic boundaries. We run a very successful drop-in coffee morning (cafe church), which has brought in many members of the wider village community. We maintain traditions for Rogation and Palm Sunday Processions, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Day Parades in addition to the major festivals of Christmas and Easter.

A well-earned “cuppa” for the working group

St James



The St James Nayland Pet Service!



NAME OF CHURCH: ST MARY THE VIRGIN, WISSINGTON (locally referred to as Wiston)

LOCATION: The church lies at one end of the sprawling village of Wiston.

COMMUNITY:

Wiston is a dispersed village and comprises some 80 houses; most are owner-occupied. The River Stour, forming the Essex-Suffolk county boundary, runs along the southern edge of the village. There is a mix of employed and retired residents; some commute to London, others work locally or are self-employed. St Mary's is the only community facility!

Local amenities and entertainment are found in larger villages such as nearby Nayland or further afield in Colchester or Sudbury. Wiston however, generates a strong community identity and this is reflected in the "Friends of Wiston Church" who offer key support to St Mary's and its congregation. The village offers support for local fêtes, festivals, concerts and fund-raising activities. Wiston has firm ties with the village of Nayland and shares a Parish Council.

CHURCH BUILDING:

A small moated Norman church established by 1135, Grade I listed. It is of tripartite design with nave, chancel and apse, an important Norman doorway, an elaborate Norman chancel arch and small windows set in the north wall. It is also celebrated for its C13 wall paintings, C19 east window and its unusual C19 barrel organ. The churchyard is open and is also managed as a wildlife sanctuary under guidance from Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The church is open daily.

CHURCHMANSHIP

Worship at St Mary's is best described as central to low Anglican and generally traditional.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The church has a stable financial base and pays its full commitment of parish share.

STRENGTHS

Despite being the smallest parish in the Benefice, St Mary's has a regular, committed congregation and faces the challenge of reaching out to more people in the local community. There is a reasonably strong following of locals who frequently join us at festival services. St Mary's regular congregation prides itself in being openly friendly to new faces, and the congregation often consists of people outside the Wiston parish. One of the lay readers in the Benefice has very close links with St Mary's. His wife is church organist and their young family regularly join the services. At the annual Nayland fete, St Mary's holds a very successful home-produce stall which often nets £1000. A second-hand books stall is held in the church porch often making £700 a year.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISSION AND WORSHIP

Our services range from the more traditional style to the more relaxed and lively worship favoured by the younger generation. In that matter we have attempted to encourage growth in congregation size, age-range and worship style. Our young lay reader and PCC have provided creative leadership to encourage stronger local connections, and to encourage younger families to become a regular part of the service pattern in the parish. Our ancient, tranquil setting has become established as the home of our Benefice Easter Vigil and Epiphany Carol Services.



Rogation Sunday – beating the bounds!

Remembrance Sunday Service – our short, but poignant, outside gathering



**St Mary's Wiston PCC meeting held outside during lockdown, dog included!
May 2021**

NAME OF CHURCH: **ST MATTHEW'S LEAVENHEATH**

LOCATION: Situated on the A134

COMMUNITY

The civic parish of Leavenheath was formed in 1952 and now has a population of 1779. There are three hamlets (Honey Tye, Harrow Street and the High Road) linked by the A134.

The two-five bedroomed modern homes are mainly owner-occupied, with private rented, Council owned and a few 'ancient' farmhouses around the edge of the village. Most parishioners live off the High Road which runs past the Village Green with play area and cricket facilities. Adjacent is the large car park of the very well-used Village Hall. St. Matthews's people provide twice monthly Sunday services and monthly free lunches/teas, coffee morning and whist drive. Many are active in the numerous organisations and clubs which make up the packed weekly programme in the village hall. The Ladybird Pre-school meets three days a week in the village hall.

Royston Wood is a frequently visited small area of community-managed mixed wood. While Leavenheath is just outside the AONB, there is an extensive network of well-used footpaths and bridleways through areas of mixed farming, extensive orchards, golf courses and Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Arger Fen. The Suffolk and Essex Small Animal Welfare charity (SESAW) in Harrow Street is well supported by village volunteers and re-homers.

The majority of parishioners' needs for education, health, retail, entertainment and employment take place outside Leavenheath. Commercial activity is generally small independent businesses, with a public house serving meals, builders' workshop and yard, tree surgeons, plant nurseries and a regional estate agent

CHURCH BUILDINGS

The 1835 Chapel of Ease was extended in 1880, a vicarage and church school were also provided. St Matthew's church is not listed. It can seat seventy. The church has the wall-mounted Leavenheath War Memorial and a recently-installed parishioners' memorial stained-glass window. The church has a steep, shared driveway off the A134 with minimal parking space.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Displayed in the church are seven white crosses from WW1 graves to the memory of soldiers lost in battle. Some show photographs of young men who did not return from war, some are from the same family. There is a stained-glass window above the door paid for by donations from the congregation plus a memorial book containing dedications to the memory of past parishioners.

SERVICES

Leavenheath holds a service each Sunday. In the church on the second Sunday there is Morning Prayer led by reader and elder, while on the fourth Sunday there is Holy Communion by Priest with invited lay assistance. The regular congregation of about 12 are seniors and interdenominational. Traditional tasks are undertaken by the congregation. There is an accomplished organist enhancing worship. A monthly coffee morning and week day Morning Office have been offered (normally lay led).

First Sunday is in the Village Hall. This modern informal service has become lay planned, prepared and led. The regular congregation is about 35 with seniors, mature, and a few young families, both Benefice wide and interdenominational. There is a music group with singers to lead the traditional and modern worship. A regular congregation team undertake setting up and associated tasks. Evening Praise is on the third Sunday in the Village Hall. This is contemporary worship with praise through music and song. It too is lay planned, prepared and led. The regular congregation of about 30 includes both young and more mature adults, interdenominational both from the Benefice and wider area. The music group with singers are also supported by a regular congregation team who undertake associated tasks.

STRENGTHS

A strong ministry team with congregations providing active assistance to enable worship. Members of the congregation provide both a welcome and assistance throughout the whole week within the community. The PCC and the Worship Teams are caring and active, with the 'occasional offices' open to all. "The Friends of St. Matthews" has been recently formed.

COMMUNITY

Leavenheath has one public house serving meals, an excellent village hall home to many social community activities, bi-monthly lunches and afternoon teas, whist, films, bowls, table tennis, badminton, nursery, scouts, beavers, Christmas quiz, craft club, fund raising events - to name but a few. Events are well supported and provide much needed funds.

The village green has a children's play area and cricket pitch, the local team playing during the summer. On the last Friday in the month volunteers provide free coffee and cakes in the church. This has proved to be an ideal venue to catch up on local news.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Parish Share and Benefice expenses are paid in full and we are financially sound. The major repair work on the roof is awaiting the necessary finance. The congregation are experienced fund raisers with the support of the wider village community.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORSHIP AND MISSION

In response to Covid-19, Revd. Val offers Online Holy Communion on the second and fourth Sundays, with the lay teams preparing First Sunday and Evening Praise Online. These are available through the Benefice Facebook and YouTube and are extending our outreach. We would wish to continue to offer these opportunities for worship.

With the prospect of new housing being built in Leavenheath, we would wish to explore the possibility of our church extending its facilities to accommodate a wider range of community activities.



Seasonal Banners and Flowers at St. Matthew's, Leavenheath



Poignant Remembrance Display at St. Matthew's



Some of the 'masked' congregation!

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOME OF THE BENEFICE TEAM

MEET REVD. VALRI ARMSTRONG



I am an active retired SSM. Alongside an average of one-two Sundays a month on the services rota, I take funerals and occasional weddings in agreement with the incumbent.

I have focused on youth and family services and outreach. I set up and have been part of the after-school club at Stoke by Nayland school, which has been running for about sixteen years. I established Messy church and had been part of the leadership team until Covid-19 intervened, I also helped set up the Family Service at Polstead. I facilitated the formation of an Open the Book team, and am a trained Godly Play storyteller though I no longer help at the Discoverer Centre. I was part of the team that formed First Sunday and led that team until my retirement two years ago.

Picture shows left to right: Elder June Smith, Revd Valri and Elder Jane Addis

During this, and previous interregnums, I have co-ordinated the ministry/churchwardens' meetings. I also provide pastoral care. I take two HC online services a month, most of the funerals and will officiate at half of the weddings booked in for this year, regulations permitting.

In the still uncertain future, I would hope to continue to take regular services once a month, funerals as pastorally appropriate and continue to focus on children and family outreach.

MEET NICOLA THOROGOOD BENEFICE ADMINISTRATOR & CHURCHWARDEN OF ST MARYS WISTON



I have been the part-time Benefice Administrator since 2013. The work includes managing the Benefice bank account, dealing with funerals, weddings, baptisms, incumbent's expenses, quarterly fees and so on. For weddings I complete the marriage document, organise banns, liaise with churchwardens, bell ringers, organists. I am self-employed and work from home. The rest of my week is taken up with being a farmer's wife, grandparent, churchwarden at Wiston St Mary's for far too many years(!), dog walking, gardening, another small accounting job and a weekly game of social tennis.

MEET DAVID ROWE, READER



My home parish is St Matthews, Leavenheath, where I live. I am married with one adult son.

I lead and preach Morning Prayer, mainly in Leavenheath, but also at some of the other churches as required.

I assist when invited to administer the wine at Holy Communion. I have occasional input into our new online services.

I am Organiser for Link between parishes and provision of a monthly pastoral letter input in the local LSPN community news, delivered to most homes in these parishes, free of charge. My wife and I are the local hub to distribute to local sub distributors in Leavenheath. I assist regularly as a reader for the Sudbury Reading for the Blind and I help at the monthly Leavenheath Community Lunches. A busy life!

MEET DAVID PRYOR, LAY ELDER

The picture depicts David leading the annual Rogation procession round the parish. David is one of two lay elders based at St James, Nayland but licensed across the Benefice.



David has been an elder since 2010 and is currently licensed as both a liturgical and pastoral elder. His duties include leading non-eucharistic services such as Morning Prayer and Evensong, and assisting at The Eucharist.

David is an experienced chorister, who, together with his wife Sandra actively support the strong choral tradition of St James.

Outside the church itself, David is an active member of the Ministry Team, visiting people in their homes, often combined with a home communion.

MEET KATY HAY, KIDS CLUB AND MESSY CHURCH LEADER



I was brought up in the Christian faith, and enjoyed attending Girls Brigade and later Scripture Union, before taking a degree in Divinity at the University of Edinburgh. I have loved working with children in the church since I was a teenager, and since moving back to this area eight years ago, have been active in leading Kids Club at Stoke-By-Nayland Primary School and Messy Church throughout the Benefice. Our Messy Church Light Party at All Hallows Eve has been particularly popular, and our June Messy Church BBQ and Challenge has regularly seen sixty or more in attendance.

We are very blessed in different but equally beautiful churches with a variety of facilities for our clubs and family services in our Benefice.

Nearly four years ago I helped lead a successful (if somewhat riotous!) Summer Club, using The Guardians of Ancora Scripture Union resource, which we hope to do again. Everyone involved, from old to young, loved it.

I am eager to continue with this work when circumstances permit, and hope to increase our outreach to children and families in our area, especially to teenagers and young adults.

We are currently exploring options to provide more family friendly online worship and possibly clubs, whilst we are unable to meet in person. I joined Leavenheath's music group a couple of years ago as a singer, for First Sunday and Evening Praise services, which I enjoy very much as singing is a vital aspect of worship for me. I am currently providing social media and tech support to the Benefice during our Interregnum, ably assisted by my rather more technical husband, Chris.

MEET DEREK JOHNS, READER

As a reader I have led Morning Prayer services across the Benefice for some time, and the Rogation trailer ride around the parishes on a number of occasions. I love to preach, and have enjoyed creating some lively participatory sermons at festival services in the



Benefice. I participate and support leading the Messy Church sessions, and assisting the planning team with extending our range of hands-on activities. My children (Samuel five and Alice seven) have loved the crafts and party teas together at Messy Church events. As my wife, Catherine, is the organist at Wiston, I have yet to take an evening prayer service as it is my time for being 'daddy' on a Sunday evening. I have also enjoyed writing the pastoral letter published in the local community magazines on behalf of the Ministry Team when it is my turn on the rota. It is also my pleasure to be a tutor for the MinTaf Reader training course across the Diocese. I am vice chair of Wiston's PCC and a Deanery Synod rep. In my day job, I am head of KS1 at St Andrew's C of E Primary School in Weeley, just outside Clacton-on-Sea.

MEET JANE ADDIS – LAY ELDER AND SAFEGUARDING OFFICER



I am a liturgical lay elder, based primarily at St Mary's Stoke by Nayland, but licensed across the Benefice. This involves leading Morning Prayer and Evensong, and helping at other services. I also help with All-age services at Polstead and Leavenheath, and am currently coordinating the online service, First Sunday.

My background is in education, both teaching and as a local authority adviser, and I am able to bring some of the skills I have picked up in my work for the church. I am the Benefice Safeguarding Officer, and am a safeguarding trainer for the Deanery; I also am an authorised DBS document checker. Lately I have become a governor at our local church school in Stoke, and I sit on the Diocesan

Board of Education. Finally, I am the secretary of our PCC in Stoke-by-Nayland.

In conclusion, we are supported by a dedicated, committed, prayerful team of outstanding individuals who work tirelessly throughout the Benefice.



The commissioning of Pauline Hatch, Lucy Bartlett, Kath Hunt, Adam Sedgwick, June Smith and Jane Addis as Lay Elders by Bishop Martin with Revd Mark Woodrow, former Rector, at St Mary's Church Stoke by Nayland, 27th May 2018.

PARISH STATISTICS & SERVICE ROTA

	Stoke by Nayland	Leavenheath	Polstead	Nayland	Wiston	Total
Population	660	1800	900	990	200	4550
Electoral Roll	53	33	32	56	25	
Average Sunday attendance before Covid-19	21	19	21	21	18	
SSM (retired but active!)		1				1
Lay Readers		1			1	2
Lay Elders	3	1	2	2		8

Baptisms, Weddings & Funeral Statistics 2017 - 2020

	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals	Events/year
2020	3	3	40	49
2019	21	12	25	58
2018	13	12	19	44
2017	22	18	28	68

Monthly worship rota (prior to Covid March 2020)

1st Sunday	8am HC 2	Nayland
	10am HC 1	Polstead
	10am Morning Prayer	Wissington
	10am First Sunday	Leavenheath
	6.30pm Evensong	Stoke
2nd Sunday	8am HC 2	Stoke
	10am HC 1	Wissington
	10am Morning Prayer	Leavenheath
	10am Morning Prayer	Polstead
	6.30pm Evensong	Nayland
3rd Sunday	8am HC 2	Wissington
	10am HC 1	Stoke
	10am Morning Prayer	Nayland
	10am family@Polstead	Polstead
	6.30pm Evening Praise	Leavenheath
4th Sunday	8am HC 2	Stoke (during Winter) Polstead (during Summer)
	10am HC1	Nayland
	10am Morning Prayer	Stoke
	10am HC 1	Leavenheath
	4.30-6.30pm Messy Church	Stoke (church or village hall)
	6.30pm Evensong	Wissington
5th Sunday	8am HC 2	Stoke
	10am family@Nayland	Nayland
	6.30pm Evensong	Leavenheath

SCHOOLS, MESSY CHURCH & OUTREACH

Active involvement in the local schools is seen as a very important part of our outreach to children and the community.

STOKE BY NAYLAND C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL



There is a strong and longstanding relationship between the church and school communities. The school values the active and varied support and pastoral care given by the incumbent for pupils, families and staff and lay members of the church run the weekly Kidsclub (currently on hold). Major festivals are usually celebrated in St Mary's Church and there are frequent whole school or class visits throughout the year as 'church detectives', learning about marriage, baptism and Holy Communion, for Godly play stories and WOW days.

NAYLAND COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Rachel Mayle, teacher, speaks:

"As a class teacher, I find the church a wonderful resource for our learning about Christianity and the local community. We were lucky to enjoy a visit to the church. The children were thoroughly excited and motivated by this visit; exploring, learning and asking questions. They were able to view and find out about features of the church they were not aware of. The children learned about the role the church plays in the community and why people go to church. The enthusiasm, help and information from the Reverend truly helped to make this such an enjoyable and valuable learning experience. It really inspired the children in their learning about churches."

LITTLEGARTH SCHOOL

Although the school is situated just across the border in Great Horkesley, Essex it has close links with nearby Nayland village and holds its annual school carol service in St James' Church.





Since January 2013 there has been a monthly Benefice Messy Church held in Stoke on 4th Sundays, 4-6pm, with occasional 'On Tour' sessions in the other churches, with attendances from 12 to 50+. We are preparing to move online soon. There is a lively, experienced team of leaders and helpers plus a rota for preparing and serving Sunday tea (these are legendary!). It is very much for all ages, from babies to octogenarians. There is a strong social and pastoral element.



Revd Val in fancy dress!



Our Reader Derek, all taped up!

Fun and games



REACHING OUT DURING LOCKDOWN

During lockdown regular weekly services have been made available via Facebook and YouTube. These have mainly included a Holy Communion service with special services also being recorded at poignant times throughout the period when our churches have been closed. The popular monthly Evening Praise and First Sunday services, which previously took place in Leavenheath Village Hall, have also been added for online viewing.

Like so many others, we have become regular users of Zoom for our Ministry Team meetings, PCC meetings and Bible Group.

The church website, <https://naylandchurches.wordpress.com/>, is used for up-to-date weekly details of church news and services with activity sheets for our younger members too.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic we have kept our Community Pantry, based at St James, Nayland, well stocked for those in need. We also have a hardship fund available to put towards specific items for the Pantry or for those who have found themselves in financial trouble. Regular monetary donations are received from parishioners.

Each village has its own church network for keeping in touch with those who have been unable to get out and about during the past year.

A LOOK AT BENEFICE LIFE

The Benefice is extremely sociable and generous. Prior to Covid-19 restrictions there were annual fetes, plant sales, street fairs, potato party, cricket matches, quiz evenings, seasonal lunches and lots more every year (see photographs below). The Benefice community also support initiatives abroad such as 'Toilet Twinning' and our Link Diocese of Kagera in Tanzania.





SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT OUR BENEFICE

A stabilising force for good reaching out to all in Christian

Generations of worshippers.

The Church is a light shining in the darkness.

Wonderful language of the Book of Common Prayer.

You are always assured of a warm welcome.

We look forward with the Church as our anchor.

Church and Benefice act as an anchor in our lives in both good and not-so-good times.

The Church and its Rector embody Christ on earth; both the building and the man represent a 2000 year old continuum of Christian belief which must and will be nourished by the community.

Our Benefice's five churches are the hearts of their communities and are there for everyone!

It is a haven of peace and tranquillity.

It is a symbol of continuity, part of local life and stability in a changing world.

The Benefice provides companionship

The church represents my faith in all that is good.

We meet in the presence of God who gives us hope.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for reading our profile.

We hope that you have been inspired to consider being called to our Benefice in the next step of your ministry.

