

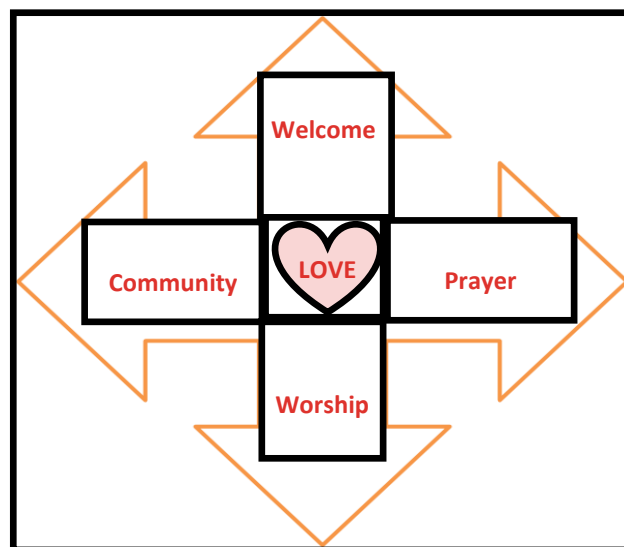
# TEAM VICAR AND ASSOCIATE PRIEST

## BLYTH VALLEY TEAM CHURCHES

Blyford - Bramfield - Chediston - Cookley - Halesworth  
Heveningham - Holton - Huntingfield - Linstead - Spexhall  
Thornington - Ubbeston - Walpole - Wenhaston - Wissett



### CHURCH IN COMMUNITY – COMMUNITY IN CHURCH



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# Welcome

**Thank you for your interest in this post. We hope it will provide an exciting opportunity for your ministry flourish as part of a diverse and inclusive team. The fourteen parishes of the Blyth Valley are made up of two inspiring rural benefices on the Suffolk coast. Within the Five Marks of Mission our buildings and the Holy Communion inform our themes of:**

- \* Creativity and Community
- \* Truth and justice
- \* Sanctuary and hospitality
- \* Spirituality and worship

**Which we express through three Priorities of:**

- \* Ministry - Services
- \* Pastoring - Care and learning with safeguarding
- \* Mission - Engagement
- \*

## **We look forward to offering you....**

- \* A home.
- \* Creative space for you and your family or household to flourish in your spirituality, person and calling.
- \* Good, positive, loving, supportive relationships between ministers and churchwardens.
- \* Established, engaged, working relationships with churches, organisations and people with whom God is working across our communities.
- \* Joint Council Lay Chair, Administrative, Treasurer and Communications Officer support.
- \*

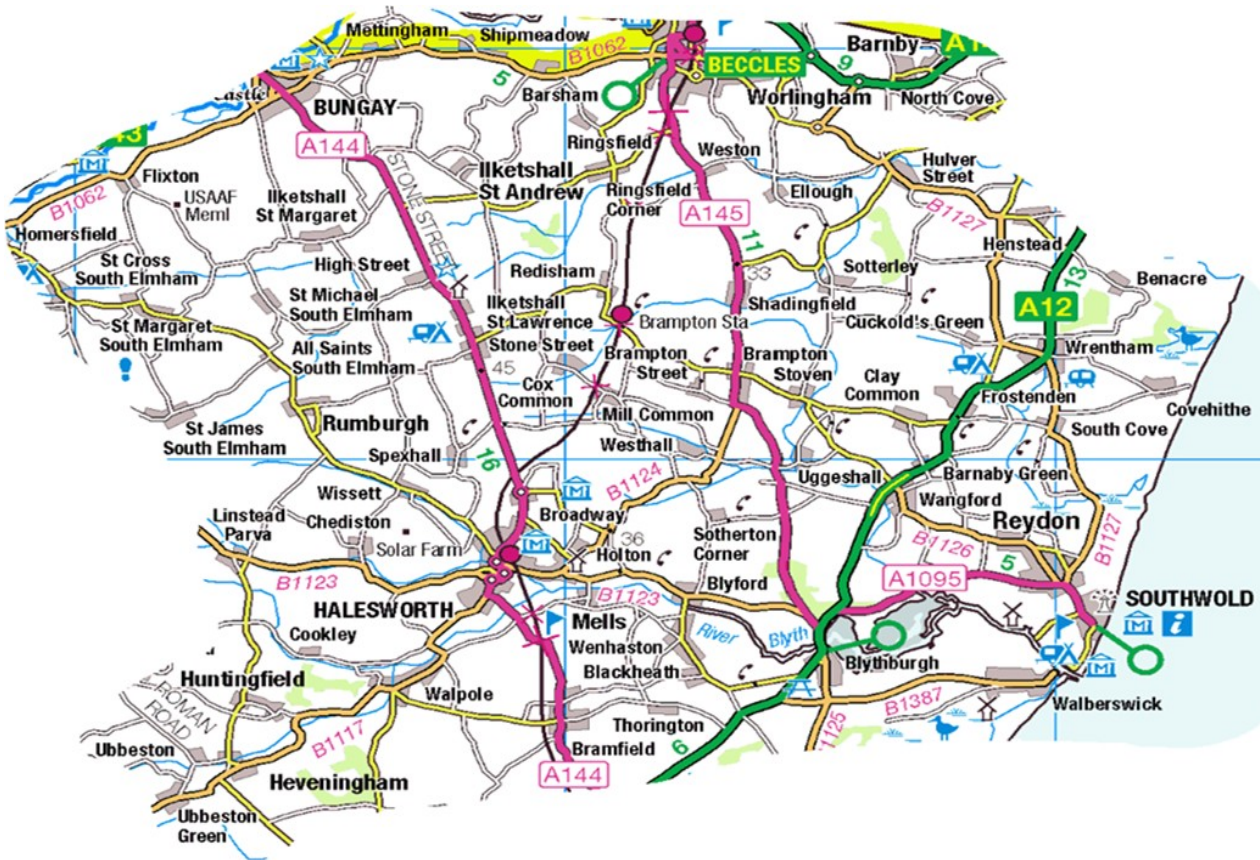
## **What you may offer us.....**

- \* Someone who is sustained by participation in Daily Office and Holy Communion.
- \* A perception and vision to notice the good in our world and communities prayerfully nurturing and identifying with it.
- \* Ready to work across the fourteen communities for regular worship, pastoral offices, and other events.
- \* You would lead, head up and manage our mission of community engagement; whether that's through music, social justice, sport, or whatever your passion.
- \* The post is designed to be flexible and creative so avoids routine governance, financial and pastoral office responsibilities. However, from time to time, cover may be required and or offered as learning experiences.

# The Local Setting

- ✓ **Halesworth** – The centre of the Cluster. An attractive ancient market town with a thriving market on Wednesdays, a Farmers' Market once a month, a great park and Town Meadow and a Thoroughfare, with lots of independent shops and cafés.
- ✓ **Education** - Five primary schools – one (Bramfield) Church of England Academy which is part of the Diocesan MAT, and three academy schools (Halesworth, Holton and Wenhaston) which are part of ASSETT MAT - a primary school trust based in Ipswich. A children's centre and a number of under-5 day care providers. Bramfield House school - an independently funded specialist residential school. Bungay High School is our nearest secondary school.
- ✓ **Primary medical care** – A community-focussed GP practice with a range of community health care services, Acute Hospital provision and A&E at James Paget in Great Yarmouth, the Norfolk and Norwich in Norwich or Ipswich Hospital, plus two care homes, three Sheltered Housing Providers, a new Palliative Care Centre, and plans to develop a new Day Centre.
- ✓ **Employment** – Food processing, farming and market gardens, light Industry, tourism and home-based small businesses as well as a small but significant number of London commuters.
- ✓ **Socio-Economic status** – High number of very dependent over 80s, significant social isolation, especially young single parents in isolated rural settings, a transient social needs population in Halesworth. There are areas of social deprivation and some very wealthy, well connected parishioners. A predominantly white British community although this is beginning to change.
- ✓ **Housing Stock** – Mixed stock with some small areas of social housing in Halesworth, high number of bungalows and retirement properties, and a high number of holiday lets and second homes, plus a number of privately-owned large estates including Heveningham Hall. The local plan is bringing a significant number of younger families to the area as new family properties are built.
- ✓ **Culture** – A thriving Arts scene, with a multi-purpose Art Centre (The Cut) – theatre, art, cinema, music, several community choirs. Also a significant interest in environmental issues, walking etc, with a range of walking groups, and leisure activities and some excellent restaurants. Headquarters of the World Land Trust and several significant conservation groups.
- ✓ **Close to the most beautiful coastline** – Southwold, Covehithe, Dunwich and the Heath, Aldeburgh – and wonderful attractions including RSPB Minsmere, Snape and the Aldeburgh Festival, Orford Castle, Framlingham Castle, fabulous seafood (Southwold Harbour).
- ✓ **Transport** – A major issue for our communities, transport links are relatively poor, but journeys are very beautiful. The A12 is the main link to Ipswich and the south, and the A143 to the west and north. There is a direct stopping train to Ipswich, where mainline trains can be caught. Two voluntary organisations provide community transport.
- ✓ **Community** – The Parishes, Town and District Councils are working together to develop a community partnership. There is a strong, growing and caring voluntary sector and good relationships between the church and the sector. Councils work together in partnerships with the community e.g. Halesworth Youth Action and Halesworth Action for Sustainability Hub.
- ✓ **Churches** – We enjoy good working relationships with the other two active denominations - Halesworth United Reformed and Roman Catholics - joining together for our Good Friday Walk of Witness and also sharing Sunday worship monthly with the Methodist Chapel in Wenhaston.

# Map of the Deanery



# Our Strategy

- \* The aim is for each Church Committee to have a buildings Churchwarden and an events Churchwarden, a treasurer and a secretary, looking after account and budget and rolling annual reporting. Non-church welcome. Supported by WhatsApp Groups and regular catch ups. Most buildings, including St Marys Halesworth, don't have toilets, heating, lighting, water, kitchens.
- \* Core Team of two full stipendiary deployable (ministry and mission) and two self supporting part time (pastoral care and discipleship), with one stipendiary curate. Whose ministry is supported by two pto priests, two licensed readers and eight elders. Team Vicar and Rector meet one to one weekly. Associate Priests one to one with Rector fortnightly. Core Team meet twice monthly with wider ministry meeting joining them the second time.
- \* We have a Joint Council meeting quarterly employing an Administrator, a Magazine Editor, a Communications Officer, an Organist and a Strategic Development Funded Family and Youth Worker. Its Lay Chair and Treasurer support the ministers and the 14 PCCs' officers. There are also honorary posts of Community Choir Coach and Tower Captain.
- \* A service a month in each parish; two a month, or more, in the larger. Plus minster model 8, 10 and 6 on Sunday, 10 on Wednesday at the town church and roving team services fifth Sunday morning and second Sunday evensong. Daily prayer and others available on Zoom, YouTube and Facebook. Rector has a TikTok presence.
- \* Four intentional events a year, to engage, fundraise and contribute, offering Lenten opportunity for personal development whilst collaborating externally on pastoral care
- \* We pray for a welcoming and inspiring attitude to generate visits and support, whilst sustaining and recruiting committee members and minsters with a recognition of our capacity and the gifts of others. On road Brown Signs, 'Church Open' and 'Service on Sunday' signage. Well-signed accessible parking solutions. Clear, attractive, in date social media presence, audio-visual (AI based?) and other innovative media, leaflets, flyers and posters about our purpose, buildings and events. Faith, health, help and tourist information, books, clothes, food, merchandise available to swap, buy or donate. Readily available contactless giving, donor forms and collection boxes and plates. Good quality refreshments.
- \* Do have a look at our website – you'll find our benefices magazine there with more information about your potential colleagues and our patterns of events and worship. It also has links and references to our other social media accounts.

# The Team Rector

Hi! I'm Dominic. I am really excited by this opportunity to explore whether God is calling you to share your faith with us, as we see the ever present God restore all that is good in our communities and countryside.

Whilst I did not achieve my childhood ambition of becoming a bin-man, I did get to join the choir at Holy Trinity Church, Cookham, and experience worship at Gold Hill Baptist Church. On leaving a progressive boarding school, I studied at Wye College, Kent, then moved to Bangor, Gwynedd, worshipping at the Pentecostal Church. After several years working in countryside management, with a number of organisations, in a number of locations, I ended up managing half the Public Rights of Way Maintenance Team for Cambridgeshire County Council.

In parallel, after a journey of ten years across five Dioceses, I was recommended for Training at my second Selection Conference. I then trained at Mirfield and served my title at Holy Cross in Crediton. Eleven years ago I took on my first rural multi-parish incumbency at Watercombe Benefice in Dorset. With my wife Liz, our dog and cat, I have been here for four years. We arrived in the aftermath of the death in-post of the previous Team Rector; and in the throes of Covid. Since then we have seen healing, restoration and hope growing in our communities, and churches.

With three full-time stipendiary clergy, supported by other ministries lay and ordained, in a world of fear and injustice, this is a great time to pray and be among us.





*This is a rota which reflects our current pattern.  
In addition there are weekday services in different churches.*

	FIRST SUNDAY	SECOND SUNDAY	THIRD SUNDAY	FOURTH SUNDAY	FIFTH SUNDAY
Halesworth St Mary	8am Traditional Communion  10am Holy Communion  6pm Evensong	8am Traditional Communion  10am Breakfast Church	8am Traditional Communion  10am Iona Worship	8am Traditional Communion  10am Holy Communion	
St Peter Group					
Holton St Peter		10am Family Communion	6pm Taize		
Wenhaston St Peter		10am Joint service with Methodists at St Peter's	10am Holy Communion	10am Pause for Thought	
Bramfield St Andrew		10am Holy Communion			
Blyford All Saints			10am Wild Church		
Thorington St Peter				10am Morning Prayer	
St Andrew Grp					
Wissett St Andrew		10am Holy Communion			
Chediston St Mary					10am Holy Communion
Spexhall St Peter			10am Holy Communion		
Linstead St Margaret		10am Matins		10am Holy Communion	
St Michael Grp					
Cookley St Michael			9.30am Tradition- al Communion		
Heveningham St Margaret		10am Family Service			
Huntingfield St Mary			11am Holy Communion		
Walpole St Mary		6pm Evensong			



# St Mary's, Halesworth

St Mary's Halesworth has served the community for centuries, steeped in history dating back to the 15th Century and sits at the heart of the Blyth Valley Churches in the market town of Halesworth.

These post Covid years St. Mary's has become a hive of regular activity with the community, utilising the building to its maximum potential. From the foodbank, community lunches, school clothes exchange, youth and tots' groups. Town and village markets, concerts, gigs, climate conferences, silent movie night, monthly recitals, to name a few.

We're an inclusive worship community using many forms of liturgy including:- The Book of Common Prayer, Common Worship, Iona and Sung Evensong and daily office. Our Rector offers daily morning and evening prayer. We offer the town annual St Georges Civic Services, Town Carols and Remembrance Services. All our services are broadcast LIVE via our YouTube channel, Facebook and Zoom.

St Mary's has open doors all year round. Imaginative plans to recreate the interior to provide toilets, kitchen, office and storage space, balancing the Heritage of the Church are in full planning. The PCC is supported by the Friend's of St. Mary's (FOSM) and the recreation committee.



 [www.halesworthash.com](http://www.halesworthash.com)

Content contributed by Jason Busby, Churchwarden, Organist and Lay Elder

Bronze Award Eco Church

# St Mary's, Walpole

St Mary's church is the local parish church for the village of Walpole. It is a Grade II listed building set on a hill. The church was closed for over 11 years then reopened in 2022 with a new Parochial Church Council.

The church has recently had renovation work including repointing exterior flint stone and a complete new limewash inside. We are currently awaiting a new compostable toilet.

There is a church service once a month where the average congregation is 19. In addition, the church is used as a communal space for events for the village e.g. musical evenings, cultural speakers and Christmas celebrations. The church is a focal point where at Easter, Christmas, Remembrance Sunday and Harvest the villagers meet and gather.

The church has recently received an Eco-award and is very conscious about ensuring a sustainable future for the building.



Content contributed by Vicky Allen, PCC Secretary

Bronze Award Eco Church



# St Peter's, Spexhall

Spexhall is one of the smaller parishes in the benefice. With a population of 190 there are just under 100 houses. Although St Peter's is in an 'isolated' location, it is near the village hall and so in some respects is at the heart of village activity. The parishioners, whether regular churchgoers or not, support each other's community activities in a friendly and joyful spirit.

The small Grade II listed parish church is largely of Mediaeval construction and there is a challenge in maintenance and conservation. Currently the PCC are actively seeking funding for major repairs and restoration of the fabric to future proof the building. The church is open for visitors every day. The churchyard has a footpath passing right through it and the many passing visitors (walkers and cyclists) are provided with a table of refreshments and a quiet sitting and prayer area.

The church community is an inclusive one, and the regular members always make a point of welcoming those who are occasional visitors or attending for the first time.

There is an electoral roll of 15 and a regular worshipping community of 6-8 people. Monthly services include Holy Communion (Common Worship), and Morning Prayer in some months. The church has joint (rotating) services with Wissett for Plough Sunday and Rogation, with emphasis on the life of the farming community. Midnight Mass and the Christmas Morning Holy Communion also alternate. A Good Friday Tenebrae service is held uniquely here, and the festivals of Easter, Christmas are especially well attended.



Content contributed by Keith Noakes, PCC Secretary

Silver Award Eco Church

# St Peter's, Thorington

Thorington is the smallest of our villages and is a rural hamlet of about 50 people, scattered over a wide area with farms, cottages and some houses are holiday homes. There is also Thorington Theatre, but no school or pub. This is the farthest east of our parishes and is just west of the A12, south of Wenhaston.

The pretty Norman church of St Peter dates to the 11th century, with a striking round tower of flint, and an aisle-less nave and chancel. The church is an important Grade 1 listed building, that is now in reasonably good condition. Given its architectural importance there is a constant need for maintenance and 'keeping on top of things'. The churchyard is kept tidy by volunteers, and there is an abundance of wildflowers especially in spring. The PCC is small. There is a Churchwarden, a Secretary and one other member at meetings.

We have one service a month here and other special services such as Christmas Carols. All are welcome here.



Content contributed by Trish Gower, PCC Secretary

# St Andrew's, Bramfield

The historic and rural village of Bramfield lies just a few miles from the picturesque popular coastal towns of Southwold and Aldeburgh, with about 500 residents.

The Church of England Primary school serves the surrounding community as well as Bramfield. There is also a village hall with regular events, and an active parish council.

With its unique detached Norman round tower and thatched roof, the medieval parish church of St Andrew is a must-see delight on any tour of Suffolk churches. Step inside, and the visitor is uplifted by the beautiful painted and carved wooden screen, c.1500. Along with the later monuments and glass in the chancel, this is a church of art historical interest and one which has been the focus of community life in Bramfield for centuries. The church stands opposite the distinctive crinkle-crankle brick wall marking the boundary of the gardens and grounds of Bramfield Hall. The church itself is in good repair, having had extensive work done to the thatched roof in recent years, and has just had a new heating boiler installed. The large churchyard is well tended thanks to the generosity of villagers past and present who contribute to the Churchyard Maintenance Fund.

We have monthly services and other special events services.



Content contributed by Dawn Munnings, PCC Secretary

# St Mary's, Chediston

Chediston is a pretty village with a population of approximately 160, with a congregation of 6-9. The church and Old Church School Room provide the main centre for the community to meet for many varied shared activities and a much treasured Christmas fair.

Earliest records of a parish church in Chediston date back to the Domesday Survey of 1086, but most likely in its present plan, it was built in the 13th century. Parts of the nave are probably Norman. It was significantly added to in the 14th and 15th centuries and restored in 1895. Most recently, in 2009 repairs to the tower and restoration of the ground-floor ring of six bells took place and in 2024, a generous legacy enabled the PCC to have the Copeman Hart organ rebuilt by Wyvern Organs, so that it is now a wonderful instrument to play and to listen to. It also contains a surprisingly large number of fascinating historical features, including: the communion rail; a font decorated with wood-wooses and other motifs; a 14th century chest; an Erasmus Paraphrase Bible; a Commandments panel and carved pulpit.

The churchyard is in current use for burials and interments, and provides valuable environmental green space for wildlife. Church activities include an average of two services per month, a Christmas Eve Candlelit Carol Service, special services for Mothering Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving and Remembrance Sunday, an active band of Benefice ringers, alongside art, music and poetry events.



Content contributed by Veronica Downing, PCC Secretary and Jo Wareham, Churchwarden.

Bronze Award Eco Church



# St Andrew's, Wissett

St Andrew's Church, nestled in the small village of Wissett with approximately 250 residents about 3 miles from Halesworth. The church, with its 12th century round tower and Romanesque doorways, is in an attractive churchyard by the village street, convenient for the Village Hall.

The church is light, clear from west to east, with traditional furniture, oak pews for about 100, and a good pipe organ. Located by the heart of the village in an attractive churchyard, the church remains open throughout the day, providing a peaceful space for prayer and reflection. Visitors often pause in the church's quiet corner to light candles.

The regular congregation averages around 12 -18 people at services, which include Morning Prayer, Holy Communion, and Breakfast Church—a simple service followed by coffee and croissants in the nave.

St Andrew's hosts a variety of special services, including a candlelit Carol Service, Crib Service, Epiphany Service of Light, Shrove Tuesday Clipping, Good Friday Stations of the Cross, Harvest Festival, and an All Souls candle-lighting, along with its Patronal Festival on St Andrew's Day.

The church is known for its welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, with a strong and confident PCC of 11 members. We are an active participant in the Team and pay our parish share in full. St Andrew's also boasts a long tradition of warm hospitality, making it a beloved hub of spiritual and social life in the village.



Content contributed by Henry Kiddy, PCC Secretary

Bronze Award Eco Church



# St Margaret's, Linstead

St Margaret of Antioch, Linstead Parva, is a small chapel dating from the early 13th Century in the westernmost end of the Team.

There are usually two services a month, Mattins (second Sunday) and Communion (fourth Sunday).

The village has around 50 households and 120 residents; most attend at least one of the village activities.

Newcomers to the village receive a hand delivered welcome pack. Fund raising activities include a music event and amp; barbecue in September at our village hall, a Gift Day with light refreshments at the church and a Christmas Market held at St Mary's in Halesworth. A '100 club' is also operated.

An annual patronal service followed by barbecue is held in July and a biennial open air service to mark the lost St Peter's Church is held in June at Church Farm. Many of our supporters are involved with other village events, run by the village hall committee.



Content contributed by Cecilia Metherell, PCC Secretary  
(photograph above, and of Malcolm Heath, Churchwarden and  
Treasurer)

# The Church of All Saints, Blyford

Blyford is a linear village lining either side of the B1123 road to Southwold. The Church is some distance from the village itself, situated at a crossroads opposite the *Queen's Head Blyford*, a lovely small pub that is well used by people across the area. The village is small, 83 houses and a population of 193.

This delightful Suffolk Church dates back to 1068, with the Chancel being added in the 13th Century and the porch and tower in the 15th Century. The Church is Grade 1 listed, although modest in comparison to others. The font is 13th Century and the sanctuary has a fine Elizabethan altar table with bulbous carved legs.

The PCC has recently had a major change of membership, and all members are committed to the preservation and improvement of the church building and the natural history of the churchyard. We are also intending to open the church for more social events. We are currently intending to upgrade the electrical system as well as discussing ideas for making the interior of the church more versatile. Plans are afoot to install churchyard benches.

Monthly Sunday services are held and are usually of a wild service format in the churchyard. These usually include a bible reading, poetry and the personal reflections of members of the congregation.



Content contributed by John Handley, PCC Secretary

# St Michael's and All Angels

## Cookley

St. Michael's Cookley is a tiny, 12th -century church with limited capacity: a congregation of 50 is as large as may be comfortably accommodated.

Access to the Grade 1 listed building is through a private garden whose owner works hard to enhance the route to the church. As a resolution C parish, we enjoy alternative episcopal oversight from the Bishop of Richborough.

The hamlet of Cookley comprises fewer than 50 houses spread over several square miles: only a handful of residents attend the monthly BCP services of Holy Communion although numbers are swelled by worshippers from other parishes.

The PCC is correspondingly small but business is conducted efficiently and our rare disagreements are settled happily.

We lack the resources (amenities, space etc) to hold individual fundraising events but we are proud of our contribution to the Heveningham Hall Country Fair, which supports many local charities and also contributes to the maintenance of our church building.



Content contributed by Catriona Chase, PCC Secretary and Treasurer

# St Peter's Wenhaston

Wenhaston is a village of 818 people, situated on elevated ground to the south side of the River Blyth valley, approximately five miles inland from Southwold.

Worship has been taking place on the site of the current church since Saxon times, and the church building bears many traces of this history. In particular, it is well-known for its remarkable Doom painting, which dates back to the late 15th century. Mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, parts of the church date back to Norman times. Removal of the pews in the 1980's means it is a flexible space, able to host various events inside the Church such as concerts and occasionally exhibitions.

Three Sunday services are held per month including one Eucharist and one service shared with the local Methodists, and one service being a service of reflection, alternating with a Creation Service. Also a monthly informal reflective service, Pause for Thought.

We have positive links with the village Methodist Chapel, including joint services for Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas. Also an active MU group, which collaborates with other groups in the Team and the local area. Several successful fund-raising events are held during the year.

The Church has strong links with the village primary school, who are helping the Church achieve its silver eco Church award, and continues to develop outreach work with young people and families, alongside key services at the school. We continue supporting the monthly community lunches in the village hall.



Content contributed by Jonathan Alder, Churchwarden

Silver Award Eco Church



# St Peter's Holton

Holton is a working village linked by ribbon development along the B1123 with Halesworth. Holton has a population of around 1,100, it is listed in Domesday, and the boundaries were redefined by the Local Government Act of 1972.

The Grade II listed church lies between the old village and the 1970's development. It is a lovely round towered church with Victorian additions and subtractions and has a regular congregation of around 16 people. There is an open churchyard, and we have an agreement with the diocese for the use of the adjacent paddock.

The church has a good relationship with the Village Hall, using it for our Christmas Fair, Quiz nights, and Carols and a Pint evening. 32 people are on the electoral roll. Services are on the second, third and fourth Sundays. Most regular worshippers live in the village.

A monthly Iona service is well-attended. Open the Book is held in Holton School. The annual Church Car Boot Sale in May is on the church paddock. Other annual fund-raising includes the Flower Festival and the Christmas Fair.



Content contributed by Chris Knevet, PCC Secretary and Joint Churchwarden

# St Mary's Huntingfield

St Mary's Church sits in a beautiful wooded churchyard in the village of Huntingfield, with a population of 160 parishioners. Although a little way outside the village this beautiful and unique church not only creates a centre for worship but also provides a community setting for regular exhibitions, plays, children's activities, talks and music.

The Church is an 11th century grade 1 listed building, largely due to its amazing Victorian painted ceiling - a masterpiece of Victorian church decoration. The church is old, with some fragments of carved stones a Saxon stone coffin and standing cross of the 10th century set into the wall of the tower. There are five bells, with its own team as well as visiting bell-ringing groups.

Services are monthly BCP communion, plus family services for Christmas, Easter, Mothering Sunday etc. Occasional services include Mothering Sunday family services, and an annual Remembrance Day service on the village green.

The church hosts an annual harvest supper in the village. A popular moth survey with breakfast takes place in the churchyard yearly. In August 2024 we launched our very own Podcast which outlines the history of the church and in particular the beautiful painted ceiling. There is a variety of merchandise that is available to buy, such as local honey, cards and guide books.



Content contributed by Sally Clarke, PCC Secretary

Bronze Award Eco Church

# St Margaret's, Heveningham

Sitting on a hilltop, close to a Roman road, St Margaret's holds a prime position in the village. With no other facilities within the village, it now serves as a community space as well as a place of worship. St Margaret's Church covers two parishes, Heveningham and Ubbeston, due to St Peter's Church in Ubbeston being converted into a residential building back in 1989.

The church is Grade 1 listed and is mentioned in the Domesday book, although the present stone build church dates from the 11th and 12th centuries. It has a fine hammerbeam room, a peal of five bells donated by George III, two fonts, an oaken effigy of Sir John Heveningham and a manorial annex pew, which also has its own fireplace.

There are 32 people on the electoral roll, with an average of 15 at regular services. Since the informal attachment to the Blyth Valley Team, we hold one Eucharist a month (BCP) and services such as Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday, a Carol Service and Pet service.

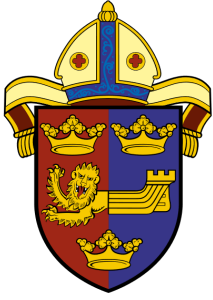
We have managed to pay our share in full with the help from many of our fundraising events. The PCC and congregation provide volunteers at the annual Heveningham Hall Country Fair, receiving from the HHCF Trust several capital grants for work on the Church.



Content contributed by Jeanette Griffin, Churchwarden

Silver Award Eco Church





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 Right Reverend Martin Seeley retired as diocesan Bishop at the end of February 2025; the leadership of the diocese is now with The Right Revd Graeme Knowles. Bishop Graeme is acting diocesan Bishop until a new appointment is made. 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

# Growing in God

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 received Strategic Development Funding for two major projects: Inspiring Ipswich, overseen by the Acting 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 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'.

# Waveney and Blyth Deanery

## Introduction



The Waveney and Blyth Deanery sits in the north east corner of Suffolk and comprises 53 parishes. There are four principal areas of population, Beccles, Halesworth, Bungay and Southwold with Reydon. Lowestoft is the nearest large town, but it is in the Diocese of Norwich. Norwich itself is a popular city for shopping, culture and football. The Deanery is predominately rural. Farming is very important and so is tourism with the coastline between Lowestoft and Felixstowe being an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Employment opportunities are provided by light industrial and commercial areas on the outskirts of Beccles, Halesworth and Reydon.

The many parish churches in our Deanery are, like most of East Anglia, listed medieval buildings with much historic interest. Travelling from Beccles to Norwich takes about 25 minutes by car, whereas Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds are at least an hour away. The East Suffolk Railway Line passes through the Deanery with stations at Beccles, Brampton and Halesworth. London Liverpool Street is about two hours twenty minutes by rail from Beccles.

The charm of the Deanery is the physical beauty of the countryside and coast. The geographic location can contribute to a sense of being a long way from everywhere, which some might consider a good thing!

## The Deanery Churches

Many of the rural parishes are characterised by the faithful few sustaining witness and worship in small villages. We gather in our iconic mediaeval churches that make up the offer that attracts business, holiday makers and retirees to this corner of the county. We are still committed to a Christian presence in every community and there are vibrant shoots of change in many of our churches. There is a high level of second home ownership in some parts of the Deanery and rural de-population because of falling agricultural and other accessible lucrative employment. Whilst deep rurality is an attraction for some, for others it is a cause of isolation and deprivation. Across our parishes the church is a valued and supported part of the geographical and social landscape.

We are engaging with the discussions about recruiting and funding stipendiary parochial clergy that are happening at all levels within the Church of England. There is a growing openness to change, and an awareness that we must all embrace a new future together if the church is to survive, flourish and grow. In many parishes SSM's, Readers, and particularly Lay Elders, share the pastoral work of the church in the community. We are also blessed by the help of a number of active retired clergy.

## Deanery Chapter

Chapter meets on alternate months. Stipendiary clergy are expected to attend and take a full part in Chapter meetings. There are several wider Chapter events during the year that are open to all forms of ministries.

## Deanery Synod

Deanery Synod meets three times a year. We have a full complement of representatives to the Diocesan Synod. Deanery Synod members are encouraged and expected to give a report of Synod business to their PCCs.

## Summary

The Deanery seeks to be a supportive structure that enables parishes and individuals to flourish where they are. In our context the sharing of experience, gifts and resources is encouraged.

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