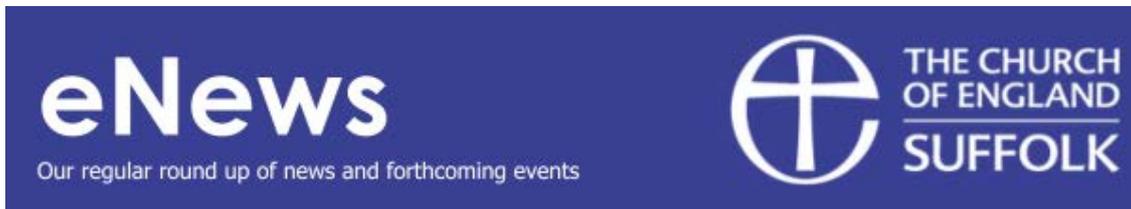


**Thursday 26 February 2026**



### **Bishop Joanne's prayers of Love and Faith**

Last week, the Church of England's General Synod gave its backing to establishing working and consultative groups to continue work on same-sex relationships and marriage, as the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) process comes to a conclusion.

The Church has allowed for a new suite of prayers for local churches to use, to enable same sex couples to have prayers of blessing within regular church services. These [Prayers of Love and Faith](#) were approved in December 2023 along with [Pastoral Guidance](#) about their use in regular public worship services.

Churches are not, however, allowed to offer bespoke, or standalone services that look like wedding services. At the moment, those who have entered into a same sex civil marriage cannot be ordained in the Church of England. Those who are already ordained could face disciplinary processes if they were to enter into a same sex civil marriage, and they are unlikely to be able to take up new roles elsewhere.

You can read the summary of what was decided last week [here](#).

LLF has tried to help the whole Church to have a careful, sensitive, informed conversation about human sexuality. It has acknowledged that people have different views on whether churches should be able to offer blessings for same sex couples and whether gay clergy should be permitted to enter into same sex civil marriage.

Although parts of the process have seen grace-filled listening and have increased people's knowledge and understanding of their differences, there has clearly also been painful disagreement. Where we are at the moment is not where I had hoped Living in Love and Faith would end up. However, it is clear that the Church of England will still be working on this: working groups have been given mandates to bring back to General Synod some further proposals. So, although LLF itself has come to an end, the Church is not turning its back on the difficult topics of disagreement that need to be faced.

I want you to know that you have the support and protection of your Bishop to express, with kindness and respect, the traditional teaching to which you hold fast. Whatever the views we hold and the differences we are experiencing, I want to set out what I believe every LGBTQIA+ person should be able to expect from the Church of England in Suffolk.

That we will love all who come through our doors and will care for and protect them in every one of our churches, chaplaincies, and Bishop's Mission Orders in the county. That churches that have chosen to offer the Prayers of Love and Faith will do so joyfully, seeing the love of LGBTQI+ people as a gift not only within their relationship, but in the wider community. That churches that have chosen not to offer the Prayers of Love and Faith will be able to signpost people kindly to churches that will be able to do so. That in all our churches, people will find welcome and care in a healthy church culture where disagreement is handled with transparency and respect.

My prayer is that whatever our feelings now about where the Church of England is in relation to conversations about sexuality, and whatever our personal views, we can continue to build up our churches as places for everyone, founded on love.

In Christ,

*+ Joanne*

To read the letter in full please click [here](#).

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**Together we pray:** We are delighted that the Revd Sarah Geileskey, from St Margaret Benefice in Ipswich will be leading 'Together we Pray' from Monday 2 March. Tune in at 8.30am on the [Bishop's Facebook page](#) to watch live or visit the page to watch again later in the day.

### **Children from Fressingfield Primary build bug hotel in St Peter and St Paul, Fressingfield churchyard**

Like many parishes, St Peter & St Paul, Fressingfield has been exploring Eco Church challenges through the work of a specially convened Steering Group. Increasingly they are coming across similar groups in their community concerned for the environment and doing



what they can to reverse these trends through conceiving appropriate projects. Whether with the Parish Council, the Primary School, Scouts or ecologically motivated individuals, this has resulted in the church finding itself as a catalyst for creating a common vision, affecting sites beyond the immediate churchyard and nearby historic buildings. Much to their surprise, they discovered that they were on track for the A-Rocha Silver Award, skipping Bronze, and have now been awarded this. While their sights remain on achieving Gold, they maintain that the real purpose of their endeavours is to change attitudes and

perceptions beyond the PCC and congregation, to reach out and assist creating an Eco-Village. We call it 'mission' changing lives and discovering God in the everyday around us.

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### **Safeguarding Training**

In-Person Foundation Level Training is taking place in Earl Stonham on Tuesday 10 March 2026. [Book here.](#)

Due to restricted capacity in the Safeguarding Training team, there will be fewer 'In-Person' training sessions this year. If you are a PCC member, children's/youth helper or other church member with Foundation level training that is due for renewal in the first half of 2026, and you do not want to access the training online, please do not miss this opportunity for In-Person Training located in the centre of our diocese. To book your place [please click here](#) where you, or your local safeguarding officer can book you a place to attend this course. If you are looking for Safeguarding Leadership training, [please check Insight here](#) for the latest course dates. Additional dates will be published as soon as they are available, so please keep checking in with Insight to find the right course for you. There will be a combination of In-Person and Online Leadership courses available throughout 2026.

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**Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent:** The Church of England's theme for Lent 2026 is Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent. This year's resources have at their heart the theme of a 'rhythm of life' – habits and patterns which help us grow as disciples of Christ day by day, especially as we prepare to celebrate the great mystery of God's saving love at Easter. All resources are listed on the Church of England website here: [Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent](#)

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### **Diocesan Confirmation Service**

This year's Diocesan Confirmation Service at St Edmundsbury Cathedral is on Sunday 3 May at 3.30pm. If you would like to present candidates at the service, please be in touch with Canon Katy by emailing [precentor@stedscathedral.org](mailto:precentor@stedscathedral.org).

### **Mission and Ministry Events**

#### **Digital Surgeries**

Join members of the Parish Resources Team to find out more about enhancing the digital giving presence in your parish. Come along and have a one-to-one session with one of our



approach to the heart of Christian faith. This course looks at the beginnings of what became Christianity, in the writings of the New Testament, and explores their narrative features. The New Testament writers passed on the gospel of Jesus Christ not as a collection of facts or doctrines, but as a series of stories that shaped people's lives. What can we learn from them about the challenges we face in doing the same in our day?

[Please book here.](#)

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**Flourish** | Saturday 2 May 2026, 9.30am for 10.00am – 3.00pm | The Salvation Army Hall, Stowmarket IP14 1NE

An invitation to all Readers, Licensed Lay Ministers and Lay Elders to join us for our annual study day. The guest speaker this year is the Revd Dr Thomas Sharp from St Augustine's College of Theology. A core part of Thomas's teaching focuses on human flourishing, especially how Christians care for others in times of hardship. The morning session focuses on Pastoral Care in a Broken World and the afternoon session is on the Theology of Safeguarding – what does it mean to care? Reserve your free space now! Click here: [Flourish - Insight CofE Suffolk](#).

**Preparing for Retirement Conference** 19-21 May 2026 | The Retreat House, Chelmsford CM3 1HA

An opportunity for clergy considering retirement from parochial or chaplaincy roles to reflect on transitioning into ministry in retirement. Many people look forward to retirement as a time when they can at last be in charge of their diaries. Some dread the thought of moving away from activities and relationships that have given their lives a sense of purpose for decades. For clergy, and especially those who have been in full-time ministry for many years, retirement raises questions about identity and meaning.

The conference blends discussion with times of quiet and is designed for clergy who are thinking of retiring within the foreseeable future. Although there will be the opportunity to raise questions of a practical nature concerning retirement, this residential conference is mainly an opportunity to reflect on your transitioning into ministry in retirement by asking yourself: 'What am I looking for in retirement?'

If you would like to join us, [here is the link](#) for the Insight booking page.

The conference cost will be covered by the diocese and won't come from your CMD grant. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact [Lesley Steed](#).

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### **Youthscape Essentials**

Youthscape Essentials is all-round training for every youth leader. This course is free and includes an extensive training manual which will be given to you before the first session. We are delighted that there are two learning streams available, online and in person.

Face to Face: 28 March, 9 May, 6 June with an online top-up session organised with delegates | venue will depend on the location of the delegates. To sign up to the face-to-face stream please click [here](#) and use course code "2201492"

Online by TEAMS: (Weds 7.00pm - 9.00pm): 16 September, 7 October, 11 November, 9 December, 13 January 2027, 10 February 2027, 10 March 2027, 14 April 2027, 12 May 2027 and 9 June 2027. To sign up to the online stream, please click [here](#) and use course code "2201540"

If you are interested in Youthscape Essentials but cannot make some/any of the above dates, then please do email [Jamie Swinerd](mailto:Jamie.Swinerd@diocesan.org), Diocesan Youth & Young Adults Enabler.

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**Preaching Hope in Troubled Times** | Saturday 20 June, 10.30am – 4.00pm, St John the Evangelist Church, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1SP

Women's Voices is back in Bury! With Liz Shercliff and Kate Bruce who will share their wisdom and learning, insights and enthusiasm with us. The theme this year will include Preaching Hope into Despair - Discipleship as Trauma - The Hope of Incarnation - Preaching Hope into Trauma. The event is open to all, women and men, but preachers and those in ministry - lay and ordained - will find this invaluable. Refreshments are provided but please bring your own lunch; alternatively enjoy lunch in the town. Save the date or email Mother Ali, Diocesan Adviser for Women's Ministry, for further information: [teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com](mailto:teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com)

### Church Community Services and Events

**Living Christ's Mercy, Justice and Hope** | Tuesday 10 March, 10.30am - 3.30pm | The Abbey Centre, London SW1P 3BU

Join the Rt Revd Rachel Treweek, Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Anglican Bishop for HM Prisons in England and Wales, and friends including the Welcome Directory, Prison Fellowship and Spring Harvest for a day of encouragement, mutual learning and reflection. [Register here.](#)

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**Grandparent Day** | Saturday 14 March, 10.30am - 2.30pm | Thomas Clarkson Centre Hospital Rd Bury St Edmunds IP33 3JT

What does it take to be a Grandparent of Faith? Come to be affirmed, supported and encouraged. The day will start with worship, and will include key speakers and workshops. Free tickets are [available here.](#)

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**St Michael's Illuminated** | Saturday 14 March, 6.30pm-8.30pm | St Michael's Church, Beccles NR34 9HE

St Michael's Church will host a spectacular light show designed by visual artist William Lindley, a former chorister at the church. His installations have been commissioned for historic buildings, festivals and public areas across the country. No booking needed. Visitors will be able to come and go throughout the evening. They will be invited to make a donation. Refreshments will be for sale.

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**Cherishing the Earth Day Conference** | Saturday 21 March, 9.30am-4.00pm | St John's Church, Woodbridge IP12 1HS

Come along to a day conference dedicated to supporting church through caring for the environment. With address from the Rt Hon Lord Deben, John Gummer. Cost £5 to cover refreshments, please bring your own lunch. [To book, please click here.](#)

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**Considering ordination in the Church of England?** | Thursday 26 March, 1.00pm or 7.30pm, Zoom

Oak Hill College is running a one-hour online event is designed to help you explore

whether God may be calling you to ordained ministry in the Church of England. Join on Zoom for an hour of biblical reflection, honest insight and practical guidance. You'll hear from experienced church leaders who have each walked this path and now serve in significant roles within the Church as well as from some current ordinands. For more info and to sign up click [here](#).

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**Cursillo Retreat** | Friday 17 April 10.00am Saturday 18 April 4.00pm, at Sizewell Hall IP16 4TX

Join this retreat with the theme 'Fishers of men', to look at how God has called us to serve him.

Cost £145.00 per person. For more details and to book before 7 March please email [bev.frost@ntlworld.com](mailto:bev.frost@ntlworld.com).

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### **Clergy Women Sailing Retreat | 6 June**

Join this Clergy Women Sailing Retreat with Morning Star Trust (MST). Offered for £25 each, and bring your own lunch and snacks. MST's mission on the East Coast is, of course, youth work afloat and they run taster days for local church/youth leaders as well a week for a local women's refuge too. The MST office team can provide further information about bookings, please contact [bookings@mst.org.uk](mailto:bookings@mst.org.uk)

Please note, you can apply for CMD Grant or SMDP funding (if you've done the SMDP leadership programme). So please make use of this if you can. You'll need to book and pay for yourself first so that you can secure your place.

## Notices

**Energy Footprint Tool launched on 12 January 2026:** The Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) is now open for churches to enter energy use from 2025. Recording your energy use is an unseen but essential act of caring for people and the planet. Complete your EFT on the Parish Returns Portal [here](#). If you require log-in details or any other assistance with the online portal, please email [statistics@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:statistics@cofesuffolk.org). If you need help with the EFT please email [James Rolls](#), our Net Zero Carbon Officer.

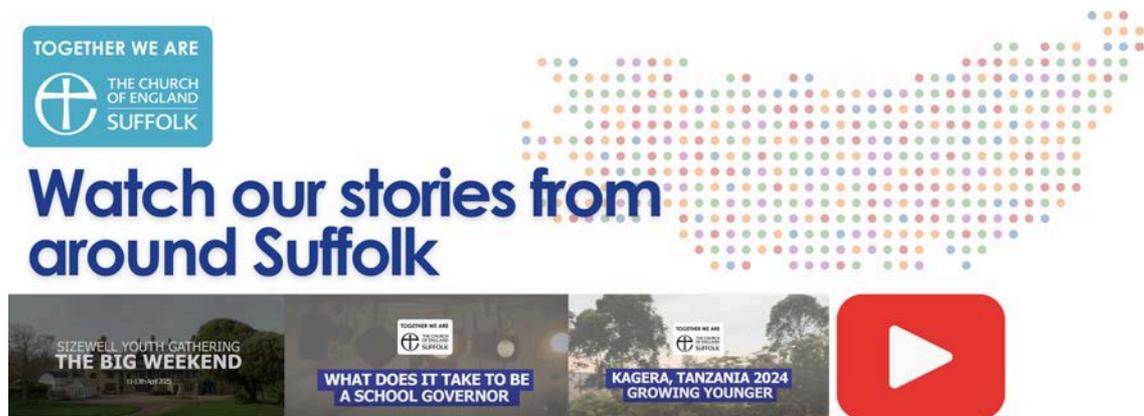
**Statistics for Mission:** Thank you to all parishes who have completed their Statistics for Mission forms - the data you provide helps to offer insights into trends such as attendance and electoral roll. The National Church deadline is 13 March 2026. Returns should be submitted via the Online Parish Returns System, which can be accessed here: [Parish Returns Online](#). If you require log-in details or any other assistance with the online portal, please email [statistics@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:statistics@cofesuffolk.org). Further information regarding Parish returns, including videos on how to submit, can be found here: [Stats for Mission - Insight CofE Suffolk](#).

## Vacancies

[Youth Minister](#) | St John's Woodbridge | Closing date: 27 February  
[Growing Younger Team Leader](#) | Closing date: 4 March

[Benefice Administrator](#) | Alde Sandlings Benefice | Closing date: 6 March  
[Safeguarding Trainer and Training Co-ordinator](#) | Closing date: 8 March  
[Vicar at St Peter & St Mary's Church](#) | Stowmarket | Closing date: 19 March  
[Children and Families' Worker](#) | Alde Sandlings Benefice | Closing date: 3 April  
[Rector](#) | North Bosmere Benefice  
[Team Vicar](#) | Sole Bay Team  
[Team Vicar](#) | Forest Heath Team Ministry  
[Team Vicar & Associate Priest](#) | Blyth Valley Team Ministry F/T Stipendiary Post  
[Non-Executive Safeguarding Chapter Member](#) | [Cathedral Volunteers](#) | [Risk, Audit and Review Committee Member](#) | St Edmundsbury Cathedral  
[Associate Chaplain](#) | Sizewell C  
Royal Naval Chaplaincy | email the Chaplain Recruiter, the Revd [Alastair Blaine](#) RN.  
[Children's and Families Minister](#) | Parish of Whitton

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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
SUFFOLK

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SIZEWELL YOUTH GATHERING THE BIG WEEKEND  
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A SCHOOL GOVERNOR  
KAGERA, TANZANIA 2024 GROWING YOUNGER



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