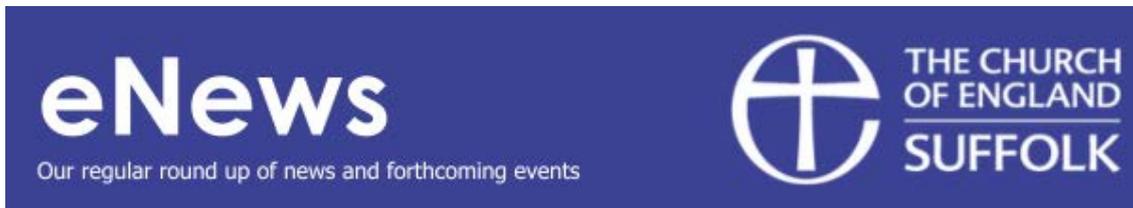


Thursday 4 January 2024



Bishop Martin's New Year message:

At the turn of the year, many of us think about how we hope the next year will be for us and for the world, and make plans for the part we might play in that. And we know too just how much the unexpected can disrupt any plans we might make. This will be my last full calendar year as bishop in Suffolk. So I find myself looking into 2024 very mindful of what I want to do before I finish. What I want to try to do falls roughly into two groups – my community-wide role in Suffolk, and then my responsibilities to support the life of Church of England across our county.

So in my county-wide role there are two broad areas I particularly want to highlight where I hope I can do more work before I finish. First to focus on our care and support of young people. Youngsters face huge challenges, and the resources to support them, though in some areas are better than they were, still leave a great deal to be desired. For the past five years I have convened a group of people who play some of the key roles in supporting young people across the county. We have tried to identify needs, channel resources, and in general help the great many people and organisations working in this arena to be more connected with each other. And we have been encouraging young people to be included in decision making that involves them or has an impact on them. I remain concerned about mental health provision for youngsters, special educational needs provision, and what is available for those who are permanently excluded. I still hope to make at least a small dent in at least one of those areas.

Secondly, I am about to have the honour of serving as the President of the Suffolk Agricultural Association, and in that role want to continue to support farmers and all those involved in the agricultural industry in our county – as well as look forward to another fabulous Suffolk Show. Again, young people are one focus for me, and I am hoping to find ways to support efforts to introduce more secondary school-aged youngsters to the world of farming – and to possible careers. I am keen too to do what I can to play my part to support farmers as they continue to engage with the challenges of changing funding and grant arrangements, and to support the growing movement towards sustainable practices to care for the environment and improve biodiversity. And to engage with what we can do to make good fresh food affordable.

So if those are the areas I want to do more in for our county, what am I wanting to tackle within the life of the church? These can be summed up in one word: sustainability. I want to continue to sustain and support our clergy and lay ministers as best I can. I want to have a solid plan on track to bring our diocesan finances back into a sustainable position.

And I want to develop a plan to ensure our wonderful church buildings are sustainable. These are not new areas, but continuations of what has been going on for some time, and where I think a little more work by me in the next year could make a significant impact.

And as I write this I find myself becoming more and more excited at what 2024 will bring, and the good that could be possible.



National Church Trust - 40 churches saved by grants:

40 churches across the UK will stay open and in good repair thanks to £496,625 awarded by the National Churches Trust in their latest round of grants. We are delighted that one of these churches was in our diocese: St Mary's Withersfield received £10,000 for urgent repairs to the tower and roof. Please contact Emma.denton@coefsuffolk at the Parish Resources Team for support with grants and funding.

St Edmundsbury Cathedral Parish Visits 2024

St Edmundsbury Cathedral is delighted to invite you to book for a Parish Visit this year. Parish Visits provide an opportunity to enjoy a reflective pilgrimage of the Cathedral and to experience the Cathedral Choir at Choral Evensong, followed by tea and cakes in the Cathedral Centre where you will meet with members of the Cathedral's community, clergy, and Friends of the Cathedral. Please be aware that spaces are limited and we usually have more waiting parishes than available Sundays so we will maintain a waiting list where necessary and allocate visits accordingly. Dates will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. A reminder the maximum number of people we can accommodate for a visit is 30.

For more details of the programme, [click here](#). To book a date, please contact Naomi Sturges by email at liturgy.admin@stedscathedral.org.

Guides to Suffolk Churches Online

Suffolk Historic Churches Trust (SHCT) have assembled all Suffolk church guidebooks online. Suffolk, with Norfolk, has the greatest concentration of mediaeval churches in Europe - indeed the world - and over the years vicars, scholars and enthusiasts have documented the individual stories of these churches. Now for the first time those histories have been painstakingly collected, scanned and uploaded as a new "Guides to Suffolk Churches Online", hosted by the Trust.

"We were conscious that many of these guides have gone out of print and that if we didn't collect them now an important part of Suffolk's social and architectural history would be lost forever," explained Geoffrey Probert, Chairman of SHCT. The Guides and full story are available [here](#).

Cathedral Honey Creates Buzz in the Cathedral Shop



St Edmundsbury Cathedral has unveiled a new product in the Cathedral Shop – honey collected from beehives on the Cathedral roof! Four hives are situated on the historic Cathedral. From this vantage point, the bees forage throughout the beautiful Abbey Gardens and historic ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund - just as the bees of the Benedictine monks would have done in medieval times.

There are two types of honey available to customers - runny and soft-set - to allow spreading, dipping, spooning, drizzling and everything in between. Jars of Cathedral Honey can be purchased for just £8.99 from the Cathedral Shop.

Drawing near to God – Advent course with Bishop Mike

Recordings of each session of this Zoom course are available on the diocesan YouTube channel [here](#). The full course has now finished and is fully available to view at your leisure.

Events

Plough Blessing for the agricultural year ahead

Sunday 7 January 2024, 3.30pm

St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds

You are invited to mark Plough Sunday with the blessing of a tractor and plough during the Choral Evensong service. This is an opportunity to celebrate farming and agriculture in the county and will include prayers led by the Agricultural Chaplain, Graham Miles. Following this, clergy and congregation will then make their way out to the Norman Tower where the plough, provided by the Euston Estate, will be located.

The observance of Plough Sunday on the First Sunday of Epiphany goes back to Victorian times, but there is a much older observance, associated with the first working day after the twelve days of Christmas. Often, work in the fields would not start back until after Plough Sunday.

Youth Work Essentials training Course

First session Tuesday 16 January, 7.15pm - 9.15pm

Earl Stonham Village Hall, Forward Green IP14 5HJ

This is an innovative new course for volunteer youth leaders to increase your skills and confidence about working alongside young people. It consists of a 10 session basic level course designed by Youthscape and aimed at helping equip churches and train people in starting out in youth ministry. Book [here](#).



Paradise Lost – Eden to where we are now - Annual Arts Programme

All Saints' Room, All Saints' Church, Newmarket CB8 8ES
Monthly on Saturdays, 10.00am-12.00pm

Saturday 13 January 'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day'. (Genesis 1:31). Humans find things incredibly difficult to make, and they take time. In contrast, God speaks each thing into existence.

We will be pencil sketching objects that God created in Eden, they were good. Materials needed: paper, pencils, sharpeners, rubbers, clipboards or cardboard and a phone if you want to take a photo!

Saturday 10 February 'And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds..." and it was so'. (Genesis 1:24) Find a natural symbol / animal inside the church to draw and we will create a 'rogues gallery' of framed pictures – here we are thinking about the representation of Eden in the church building. Materials needed: oil pastels, paper, crayons, watercolours, water, brushes, frames.

Saturday 16 March – 'See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yes I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these'. (Matthew 6:28-29) Jesus tells us: don't worry! It is like a command and today let's use this time to be calm and learn from the flowers. Use of the flowers in church – creating a mixed-media collage to remind us of the Eden we have lost and the hope of the new Eden in the future. Materials needed: old magazines, PVA, scissors, paper and glue spreaders / brushes. No booking is required for these events, more information is available [here](#).

Deanery Drop-In Sessions



Join members of various teams from the Diocesan office who are there to offer advice on Children's and Families' Ministry, Youth Ministry, Giving, Grants, Discipleship, Communications, Vocations or anything else you'd like to ask – a real opportunity for us to have conversations and help people. Our next Drop In Sessions are on:

Zoom | Tuesday 23 January | 3.00pm to 5.00pm: book [here](#) or 6.00pm – 8.00pm: book [here](#)

Thomas Clarkson Centre, Bury St Edmunds IP33

3JT | Tuesday 6 February | 3.00pm to 5.00pm: book [here](#) or 6.00pm – 8.00pm: book [here](#)

St Augustine's Community Hub, Ipswich IP3 8TH | Monday 13 May | 3.00pm to 5.00pm: book [here](#) or 6.00pm - 8.00pm: book [here](#).

Enhancing Pastoral Ministry

Wednesdays starting 10 January 2024, 7.30pm
Earl Stonham Village Hall, Forward Green IP14 5HJ

Enhancing Pastoral Ministry is a six-session course for people who are involved in pastoral

care (e.g. Readers, Lay Elders, clergy, pastoral visitors) as well as those interested in a deeper understanding of this ministry. The course is open to all and free of charge. For course dates, more information and to book, please click [here](#).

So What About the Old Testament?

Wednesdays starting 24 January 2024, refreshments from 7.00pm, sessions 7.30 - 9.30pm
Earl Stonham Village Hall, Forward Green IP14 5HJ

In this short course, Hugh Williamson will try to open our eyes to the different types of material in the Old Testament, with an eye on how we can apply it in our own times in both church and society. The course is open to all and is free of charge. For course dates, more information and to book please click [here](#).

Lightwave Small Group Leader training - in person

Wednesdays starting 31 January 2024, 7.15pm - 9.15pm
13 Spring Park, Chapel Road, IP6 9NX

Join this course for Lightwave group leaders and helpers. Lightwave groups do life together - worship, serve, learn from the Bible, pray and help new people to find faith too. This six-session course takes place in person and ideally, you will need to complete all six sessions. Come prepared to learn, to laugh, to pray and be both supported and challenged. This course is free of charge. For further information please contact nina.seaman@cofesuffolk.org.

Lay Elder training and social morning

Saturday 3 February 2024, 9:30 AM
Salvation Army Hall, Stowmarket IP14 1NE

This Lay Elders event was postponed as a result of the storms in October - we are delighted that we have been able to set a new date with the same guest speakers. The Ven Rich Henderson, Archdeacon of Suffolk, will give a keynote address, and bookings are being taken for either pastoral or liturgical workshops led by Karen Gardner and the Revd Canon Sharon Potter. After the morning's training we will share some social time while we eat our lunches - cake will be provided! For more details and to register for your free place, please click [here](#).

In the beginning was the story... Approaching the New Testament

Starts 1 May 2024 7.00pm to 9.30pm
Earl Stonham Village Hall, Forward Green IP14 5HJ

This course looks at the beginnings of what became Christianity in the writings of the New Testament, and explores their narrative features. The course is open to all and free of charge. Please book [here](#).

Gather: The Big Weekend 2024

Friday 12 April 2024 6.00pm to Sunday 14 April 4.00pm
Sizewell Hall, Leiston IP16 4TX

A weekend of craziness, worship, games and friendship all focused around learning more about living as a Christian in the C21st. The Big Weekend is organised by the Church of England in St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, and run by experienced youth workers from



around Suffolk. Offering young people from school years 7-13 the chance to explore faith and have fun! Book [here](#).

Notices

Notices

UK Minority Ethnic (UKME): The Church of England is actively seeking more people from a UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) background to serve as ministers and lay leaders within the church. To grow the number of people taking up vocations in our diocese, the Revd Stuart Batten, Diocesan Director of Ordinands, is looking to encourage and develop the vocations with people from all backgrounds. We are also pleased to announce that we have appointed the Revd Kiran Lotay as our UKME Vocations Champion. Please see details [here](#).

To support UKME in our churches, the Church of England's Racial Justice Unit is encouraging all Global Majority Heritage (GMH) / UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) clergy, ordinands, lay ministers and leaders to register with the GMH/UKME communications network. Please sign up [here](#).

The Revd Robert Otule is Diocesan Racial Justice Officer, who works with the Diocesan Racial Justice Group to ensure we combat racism in all its forms, promote training and awareness appropriate to different contexts, monitor representation and participation of all groups across the life of the diocese and advocates for those suffering any form of racism. Please see details [here](#).

Commemorating the Land Army Girls: The Suffolk Women's Land Army Memorial Trust has been set up to raise awareness of the work the Land Girls did for the war effort; it also seeks to create a permanent and lasting memorial in Suffolk to honour the women who served in the Women's Land Army and Women's Timber Corps in Suffolk during World War II, including working with horses, especially the endangered Suffolk Punch. Barrow Benefice is working alongside the Memorial Trust and we are looking for stories from across the county of people who served in the Land Army – either personal accounts that have been handed down, including any photos (particularly of the people the stories relate to), and/or memorabilia. Please send any information to the Revd Lynda Sebbage – revlyndasebbage@gmail.com or call 01284 811280.

Statistics for Mission

Thank you to all parishes who have already submitted their Statistics for Mission forms. Completing the Annual Statistics for Mission Return has benefits for Parishes, Deaneries, the Diocese, and the National Church. Statistical information gives a great repository of data enabling analysis of trends in growth or areas of decline, and enables resources to be

prioritised accordingly. The National Church deadline is 31 January 2024. Returns should be submitted via the [Online Parish Returns System](#). If you require log-in details or any other assistance with the online portal, please contact statistics@cofesuffolk.org. Further help can be viewed on our website here: [Stats for Mission Help](#).

Vacancies

[House for Duty Priest](#) | Lakenheath with Santon Downham and Elveden | Closing date: 5 January

[Female Chaperon & Choir Assistant](#) | St Mary-le-Tower | Closing date: 11 January

[Insight Technical Support \(Temporary part-time\)](#) | Closing date: 29 January

[Team Vicar](#) | The Forest Heath Team Benefice | Closing date: 2 February

[Priest in Charge](#) | Wickham Market & Pettistree | Closing date: 6 February

[Chaplain and Leader of Youth Orientated Congregation](#) | Debenham High School | Closing date: 8 February

[Rector](#) | Walton and Trimley | Closing date: 11 February

[Priest in Charge & Archdeaconry Mission Enabler](#) | Sproughton, Burstall, Copdock with Washbrook | Closing date: 13 February

[Director of Music](#) | Woodbridge

River Church, Ipswich are recruiting various posts - all details at:

riverchurchipswich.org/vacancies

[Click here to print and share with others](#)



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