Thursday 5 March 2026

eNews

Our regular round up of news and forthcoming events

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND SUFFOLK

Bishop Joanne has joined Muslims in celebrating their daily fast in Ipswich



The Muslim community in Ipswich welcomed people from all faiths to celebrate the ending of their daily fast during Ramadan.

The guests for the community Iftar included Bishop Joanne along with other community leaders and guests.

Iftar is the evening meal that Muslims eat at sunset to break their daily fast during Ramadan. They begin fasting at dawn with a pre-dawn meal called Suhoor and abstain from food and drink until sunset. The precise timing of Iftar shifts throughout the holy month, depending upon the changing daylight hours. Read the full story on our website here.

External evaluation of strategic development funding

The Diocese received Strategic Development Funding over seven years (2019 – 2025) from the national Church of England for two major growth projects – Inspiring Ipswich and Growing in God in the Countryside.

Inspiring Ipswich, which was supported by £2.7 million, exceeded its ambitious outcomes, making 36,376 new contacts with those outside the Church, including top-up shops, school assembly and prayer spaces, Messy churches and Christmas services. The size of the total worshipping community within Ipswich has increased by 20% between 2019 and 2024, showing the impact the project has had on the town's church numbers.

The Growing in God in the Countryside project was supported by £2.3 million and aimed to grow congregations in more rural areas, especially through the small groups of the Lightwave Community. As of 2025, 41 of these small groups exist, with 19% of benefices within the diocese now having a small ecclesial group engaging in outreach.

The independent evaluation by Brendan Research is available here.

Suffolk Hackathon for the voluntary sector

Last Thursday we were invited by the Suffolk High Sheriff, Gulshan Kayembe, to The Power of Prevention - Hackathon! The day was for representatives from a diverse group of volunteer sector charities, not for profit organisations as well as civic and faith groups.



The aim was to create social impact and enable change to support those in our communities with a specific focus to develop better ways of stopping people falling into the criminal justice and social care systems. The sessions focused on sharing best practice, strengthening grassroots work and making sure organisations learned from people with experience of addiction, poverty and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Those representing faith groups included our Diocesan Director of Engagement, Tim Holder who said "*As the Church of England in Suffolk we have so much to offer and have always been committed to supporting everyone. We are also unique in that we have well established, welcoming and safe churches in every community across the county,* but *we must all be willing to be open and honest about the ever rising levels of need and work together to address the challenges and barriers there are to overcome. Networking at this event was a great opportunity to meet others, share knowledge and explore ideas where our church communities can play their part to support anyone who needs help."*

Success at our Fieldwork Conference



Around 100 people from across the diocese came together on 28 February for Fieldwork: Celebrating the Rural Church – a day conference on rural mission and ministry. Organised by a group of rural ministers along with the diocesan Mission and Ministry Team, the conference was held in the beautiful and ancient Wingfield Barns in north Suffolk. This rural setting gave a great backdrop for a day exploring the joys and challenges of being "boots on the ground", God's people in rural settings seeking to share his love and the good news of Jesus Christ.

We heard from keynote speaker the Revd Jo Neary, a rural parish priest and theologian from Sarum College, who spoke inspiringly of the distinctive value and potential of the rural church. The Revd Leon Collyer, a farmer and priest in this Diocese, gave an engaging talk on the realities of farming, and spoke with passion of the spirituality of working with the land and valuing nature. After lunch, a variety of breakout sessions gave attendees the chance to think about pioneering in rural areas; developing new ways of being church alongside the traditional; working with children and young people and with our schools; how to make the most of our beautiful church buildings; and 'living churchyards' as space for nature and community. There was a real buzz throughout the day as people shared stories and ideas, and despite the challenges of old buildings and scarce resources, a deep sense of hope and optimism as we remembered the generosity and abundance of God.

During the closing worship, participants placed Suffolk-made silk squares in a pattern reminiscent of a patchwork of fields, praying for their own places and for our work together in God's mission field. Do look out for more Fieldwork events in due course!

Together we pray: Following his trip to Tanzania in February, the Revd Richard Stainer will be leading 'Together we Pray' from Monday 9 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.

Diocesan & Mission and Ministry Events

Safeguarding Training In-Person Foundation Level Training | Earl Stonham on Tuesday 10 March 2026.

Due to a lack of 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.

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 Giving Advisors to find out about purchasing or borrowing a contactless device, setting up online giving (including QR codes), get your contactless device repaired or updated with new campaigns, and finding out how to have an effective online giving presence on your ACNY or website pages. For more information email emma.denton@cofesuffolk.org , or trudie.harkin@cofesuffolk.org Diocesan Giving Advisors.

Tuesday 17 March | 4 Cutler Street, Ipswich IP1 1UQ | 1.30pm, 2.30pm, 3.30pm
Wednesday 29 April | St Edmundsbury Cathedral | 9.30am, 10.30am, 11.30am, 2.00pm, 3.00pm
Wednesday 8 July | St Michael Church. Framlingham | 9.30am, 10.30am, 2.00pm, 3.00pm
Further dates across the county to follow. Book here.

Interested in Reader Ministry? Saturday 21 March, 10.00am to 12.00pm | Best Western Brome Grange Hotel, Norwich Road, nr Eye, IP23 8AP

Come along to our informal Coffee Morning - an opportunity to find out more about Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers). Led by Diocesan staff and those currently serving as and training to be Readers. Even better, there will be cake! Please email Lauren Moore to express your interest, ask any further questions and to enable us to arrange catering.

Lark Rise Retreats

'The Pilgrim's Progress - **exploring the themes of John Bunyan's novel'** a study day led by Jane Jennison on Saturday 28 March at St Nicholas Church, The Ferry, Felixstowe
'The resurrection appearances of Jesus', a quiet day led by the Revd Penny Brinkley on Saturday 11 April at St Nicholas Church, The Ferry, Felixstowe
'Faith on the edge - Jesus heals at the margins', a retreat day based on Luke 8.40 to 56, led by the Revd Helen Rengert on Saturday 9 May at St Edmunds Church, Langer Road, Felixstowe

Days run from 10.00am – 4.00pm and cost £27/person including refreshments and lunch. A bursary fund is available. More details and bookings are on www.larkriseretreats.org or call Catherine Bond and Jane Pearse on 01394 284213.

The Gathering | Friday 24 April 6.00pm - Sunday 26 April 2.00pm | Vauxhall Farm, Great Wenham CO7 6QQ



The Gathering is a residential weekend organised in partnership with Ipswich CYM and youth leaders from across Ipswich. The cost for this weekend is £110 per young person. Bookings are managed by CYM Ipswich using the online *Ticket Taylor* system. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to email Jamie Swinerd. To find out more and book please visit our website here.

In the beginning was the story. A different approach to the New Testament | Starts Wednesday 29 April 2026 for seven weeks at Earl Stonham Village Hall
Led by the Revd Canon John Parr, Approaching the New Testament takes a story-shaped 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.

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.

Celebrating our Care for Creation | Save the date: Saturday 9 May
To mark the 10th Anniversary of A Rocha's Eco Church award scheme, there will be a day of celebration at St Edmundsbury Cathedral. The day will include talks, exhibitions and stalls, culminating in a service of celebration at 3.30pm. The day is open to anyone who

has helped their church achieve an Eco Church award, is currently working towards an award or who wants to get involved in the Church's environmental mission and ministry in their community. More details to follow.

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.

If you would like to join us, book here. 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 email Lesley Steed.

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.

Online by Teams: (Wednesdays 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, Diocesan Youth & Young Adults Enabler.

Church Community Services and Events

Grandparent Day | Saturday 14 March, 10.30am - 2.30pm | Thomas Clarkson Centre Hospital Road 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.

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.

Easter Encounter | 21 March, 12.00pm - 3.30pm | St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds
Come along to this interactive Easter story offering a new presentation to meet

the characters who witnessed Jesus' death and and his resurrection. This is a family event but children must be accompanied. Followed by Easter crafts and refreshments. To book your place and for further information contact: jennifer.aston@btinternet.com

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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 an address from the Rt Hon Lord Deben, John Gummer. Cost £5 to cover refreshments, please bring your own lunch. To book, please click here.

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.

British Sign Language Worship Workshop | Saturday 20 June, 10.00am-4.00pm, Thomas Clarkson Centre, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3JT
Simple lunch provided.
Signs of God will be delivering training in British Sign Language in the context of worship. A simple lunch will be provided. Cost £20 per person, to book please click here.

Notices

Energy Footprint Tool: This 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 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 Further information regarding Parish returns, including videos on how to submit, can be found here: Stats for Mission - Insight CofE Suffolk.

Vacancies

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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