

Sancroft Benefice

*Six rural parishes in North Suffolk
Fressingfield, Mendham, Metfield, Stradbroke,
Weybread and Withersdale*



September 2026

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WHO WE ARE

We are a benefice of six parishes set in the beautiful rolling Suffolk countryside of the Upper Waveney Valley. Each village has its own identity and we take strength from our diversity and work together in practical love and worship. We stand united in our aim to see more people encountering the love of Jesus Christ and growing in their faith.

THE VACANCY

This is our first vacancy for seventeen years: with it comes the opportunity to lead and shape its ministry, supported by a team of ordained clergy and commissioned lay elders diverse in its range of experience. Two of our parishes (Fressingfield and Mendham) have successfully piloted a diocesan scheme under which an appointed Recognised Local Leader leads development appropriate to the parish.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE

- developing a fresh vision for the benefice and unifying our aims
- growing younger congregations and further developing links with our schools
- deepening connections with community groups in the service of our villages
- caring for our medieval buildings and finding ways to use them as a resource
- sustaining funding and strengthening finances
- facilitating and encouraging communications and online presence

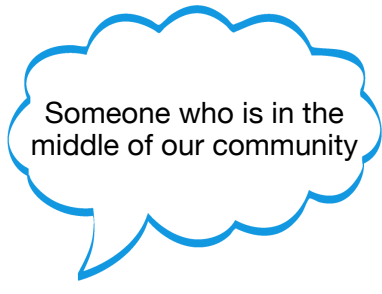
WE ARE LOOKING FOR A RECTOR WHO WILL

- lead collaboratively a creative and innovative vision for growth in our churches, within the Anglican tradition
- reach out to young adults and children, supporting them in their journey of faith
- develop gifts and vocations, lay and ordained, encouraging missional disciples
- be a visible spiritual and pastoral presence in the parishes, sharing the love of Jesus Christ with all in the community
- encourage us further in our commitment to the environment through Eco Church, which we see as a mission opportunity

*or be in the words of
some of our school
children*



Someone who talks to us



Someone who is in the
middle of our community

WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER

- A benefice that works cohesively in friendship and ministry
- An experienced and diverse ministry team
- Established outreach in schools and the community, an active Mothers' Union, home groups for bible study and prayer
- Newcomers actively seeking and discovering welcoming churches
- A benefice which takes its safeguarding responsibilities seriously
- Strong community networking at the parish level
- Respect for our Rector's personal space and time
- An experienced administrator
- A four-bedroom house and garden in a large village with amenities

A TYPICAL PATTERN OF SERVICES

August 2026			
Sunday 2nd Trinity 9 <i>Isaiah 55:1-5</i> <i>Matthew 14:13-21</i>	9.30am	Mendham	Village Service
	9.30am	Metfield	The Gathering
	10.30am	Fressingfield	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Stradbroke	Holy Communion
Sunday 9th Trinity 10 <i>1 Kings 19:9-18</i> <i>Matthew 14:22-33</i>	9.00am	Withersdale	Holy Communion BCP
	10.30am	Fressingfield	Informal Worship
	10.30am	Metfield	Village Worship
	10.30am	Weybread	Family Service
Sunday 16th Trinity 11 <i>Isaiah 56:1, 6-8</i> <i>Matthew 15:21-28</i>	9.30am	Mendham	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Fressingfield	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Stradbroke	Informal
		Fressingfield	No Celebration Service
Sunday 23rd Trinity 12 <i>Isaiah 51:1-6</i> <i>Matthew 16:13-20</i>	10.30am	Fressingfield	Informal All Age Service
	10.30am	Metfield	Holy Communion
Sunday 30th Trinity 13 <i>Jeremiah 15:15-21</i> <i>Matthew 16:21-28</i>	10.30am	Weybread	Benefice Holy Communion

OCCASIONAL OFFICES IN 2025

	Fressingfield	Mendham	Metfield	Stradbroke	Weybread	Withersdale
Baptisms	0	1		1	0	0
Weddings	1	0	2	1	0	0
Blessings	0	0	1	0	0	0
Funerals	5	4	8	7	3	2

LIFE IN THE BENEFICE



Easter sunrise service



After church coffee



Clergy conference



School bug hotel for Eco Church



Produce market



Rural welcome to morning service



Service with a smile



Awe and wonder!



Knit & Natter



Mothers' Union campaign on domestic abuse



Palm Sunday



Churchyard conservation

ST PETER & ST PAUL FRESSINGFIELD



Fressingfield Church is active and vibrant, with a welcoming and committed congregation dedicated to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and his love. Rooted in our faith in God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and guided by scripture and the traditions of the Church of England, we seek to grow in faith and to respond with care and compassion to the spiritual and social needs of our community. We value our strong and longstanding links and play an active role in village life. As we look to the future, we are keen to work with our new priest to build on these foundations and to develop our mission and ministry further.

Dating from the 15th century, the church stands at the heart of the village and hosts regular civic events alongside traditional and informal worship. We have an active team of bell ringers and a recently restored Father Willis organ. Our congregation is largely middle-aged to elderly, with an average attendance of 35 to 45 and we are keen to develop ministry among children and young people. We have a small, enthusiastic choir at our benefice and Communion services and hope to reintroduce regular Evensong. Once a month, a live band leads an uplifting and engaging evening service of praise and worship.



Worship and church life are sustained by a local ministry team of ordained clergy and lay elders alongside a Recognised Local Leader. Together with the PCC, they oversee services, Bible study, prayer groups, pastoral care, and the stewardship of buildings and resources. We have a strong community focus, a key outreach being the weekly Coffee Break held in the Sancroft Hall which provides valued companionship for many regulars. Seasonal activities include Lent suppers, produce markets, occasional harvest suppers, bring and share lunches. We enjoy strong relationships with the Baptist and Methodist churches, with whom we share village breakfasts and village prayers, and we collect for the local food bank.



Our commitment to environment and community has recently been recognised with a Silver Eco Church award, achieved through collaboration with local organisations and our primary school. We have a close and valued relationship with the school, with clergy led assemblies, Open the Book visits, termly services in church, termly wilder day classes in our churchyard, and strong clergy pastoral support. Pupils have shared their views on the qualities they would value in a new priest. (See page 3)

Fressingfield is a thriving and well-served village, with its primary school, medical centre, local shop, sports club and The Swan pub. It is renowned for its garden festivals and regular music concerts, as well as the 16th-century Fox and Goose Inn, held in trust by the PCC. While many parishioners are retired professionals, the village is also home to young families and some economically vulnerable. The PCC is additionally responsible for the Sancroft Hall and the adjacent green, which serve both the church and wider community. The future development of the nearby old stables could present an opportunity to deepen our engagement with young people in the village.

achurchnearyou.com/church/2280

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, MENDHAM

Mendham has benefited greatly from the pilot Recognised Local Leader scheme, with a big impact on mission and growth through the dedication of a named local priest.

WORSHIP

A variety of services both traditional and informal

OUR CHURCH

- ◆ A Grade 1 listed building in reasonable repair
- ◆ Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Waveney Volunteers for Nature advise on our churchyard planning
- ◆ New toilet facilities and revised servery
- ◆ 47 names on our electoral roll
- ◆ Church larder supported by our community and grants
- ◆ Visiting bellringers
- ◆ Card reader for giving
- ◆ Parish finances based on regular giving and fundraising



MENDHAM - AT A CHURCH NEAR YOU LINK

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OUR COMMUNITY

- ◆ Church opened every day by villagers
- ◆ Outreach within our village and beyond
- ◆ Welcoming refreshments at every service
- ◆ Children's and adult sing-along groups use our church



WORKING ALONGSIDE OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOL

- ◆ Strong links with staff and pupils
- ◆ Local Minister leads regular assemblies
- ◆ Open the Book team
- ◆ School visits for seasonal festivals

SOCIALISING and FUNDRAISING

- ◆ Weekly prayers in the pub
- ◆ Vibrant fundraising committee
- ◆ Event venue for a variety of concerts - sales - fairs
- ◆ Refreshment support for other village events
- ◆ Good hospitality and outreach traditions with other village activities, clubs and societies
- ◆ Community support for church fabric and building upkeep



ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, METFIELD



Metfield Church stands in the centre of the village and is a Grade 1 building. It is very light and bright and the PCC takes pride in keeping the church well cared for and in preserving the historic working medieval clock. There is a canopy of honour which survived the dismantling of the rood screen in the 18th century. The church has an enthusiastic team of bell ringers.

We are a very welcoming church with a variety of traditional forms of worship led by different members of the ministry team with some congregational involvement. In addition to the monthly Village Service and Holy Communion, we hold our own *Gathering* where we share poetry and prose, sing a hymn and enjoy refreshments.



We work happily with other groups in the village and have tradesmen and volunteers who help to look after the church and churchyard. With a Bronze EcoChurch award already achieved, we are working towards the Silver award. Through good housekeeping, we are managing to keep our finances under control but need to dip into our reserves at the end of each year.



The village supports a volunteer-run shop, an active village hall and a monthly community café. There is no school or pub but an increasing number of weekend and holiday properties: this, sadly, is reflected in a falling church electoral roll and declining congregation, with average attendance of 20 rising on festival days. Weddings in 2025 are noted on Page 4 but the seven funerals recorded were not all of residents as many people have long affiliations and affection for our church.

As a friendly and welcoming community, we would welcome an approachable and adaptable incumbent willing to embrace the challenges of a rural situation.

ALL SAINTS, STRADBROKE



OUR WORSHIP

- “A church family engaged with the community”
- Holy Communion once a month
- Monthly informal service with opportunities for discussion
- Services include coffee and fellowship
- Weekly prayer group in the church
- Lay participation in leading occasional services and assisting with readings and prayers

OUR CHURCH

- An imposing Grade II listed building in the centre of a vibrant village
- Tower that holds a rare 10 bells maintained for visiting ringers
- Recent renovations to 4 clerestory windows, heating and tower clock
- Church kept open daily with quiet prayer space maintained inside



OUR COMMUNITY

- Donations to Food Bank, Harvest and Christmas Gift Appeals for locals in need
- Monthly Chat and Connect tea and biscuits in Courthouse Café
- Church as a venue: community choir concert, local artists’ exhibition and sale, High School and WI events
- Advent lights in churchyard covered by Stradbroke Radio
- Remembrance Sunday civil service at the War Memorial



COMMUNICATION

- Guidebook available in church
- Regular page in village monthly magazine
- Flyers in church and Courthouse Café advertising inclusive celebrations, thanksgiving and memorial services to welcome all faiths and no faith
- Regular giving, cash wall safe and card reader in church for donations all gift aid registered
- Free WiFi and book & puzzle sales corner in church



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- Primary School Easter and Christmas services in church
- Primary class church visits for curriculum Christian learning
- Open the Book team visit the Primary School twice a term
- Workshops in church: Christmas around the world; Easter Garden; Christian Christmas crafts
- High School music group concert

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ST. ANDREW WEYBREAD

Our Worship

“A Church family where anyone belongs”

One monthly service: A blend of ritual and informal worship, with rural ministry in mind.

Lay participation in prayers and readings

We host the unifying Benefice Holy Communion service every fifth Sunday.

achurchnearyou.com/church/2283



Our Church

A place in the village that is always open for quiet prayer and contemplation.

Building Grade II*, with Norman round tower and sympathetic 1860's restoration.

A dedicated team of parishioners maintains the churchyard and volunteers clean and arrange the flowers

What you will find

A small church with a big welcome; our hospitality encourages everyone to meet.

A “generous” church that is well organised and forward thinking.

Digital giving and card reader just introduced.



Our Community & Friends

Innovative and seasonal fundraising

More than fifty “friends” on our Easter thank- you list for help and support

Strong links with Parish Council, Village Hall, local businesses and tradespeople

ST MARY MAGDALENE, WITHERSDALE



Withersdale is a small hamlet within the civil parish of Mendham and this is a small church, but with a big history and a loyal congregation. It has been described as a 'charming prayer book church' to reflect not only its interior but the fact that its benefactor, Archbishop William Sancroft, was the publisher of the 1662 edition of the Book of Common Prayer. Its churchyard and rural outlook underline the way landscape and history bring worshipper and visitor alike a sense of peace and tranquility.

Services are taken entirely from the Book of Common Prayer, reflecting our belief that it enhances and perpetuates values and doctrines that go beyond fashion and so avoid extremes. Increasingly, people of all ages are attracted to our Prayer Book services.

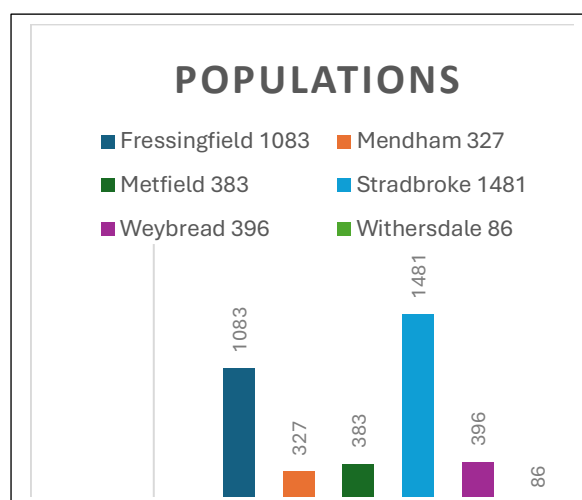
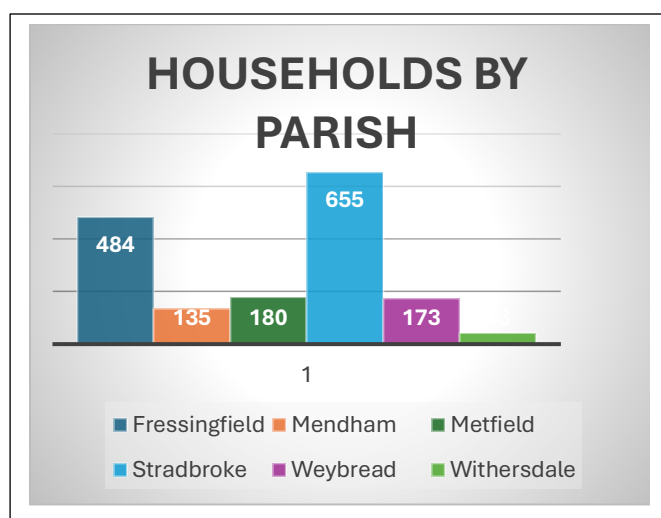
Our present monthly Communion Service is attended by 10-12 regulars and parishes from across the benefice are often represented: we have an ambition to become more truly a benefice resource, offering Morning and Evening Prayer and Choral Evensong in addition to Festival services and we look for a new Rector for whom the Book of Common Prayer is a valued resource.



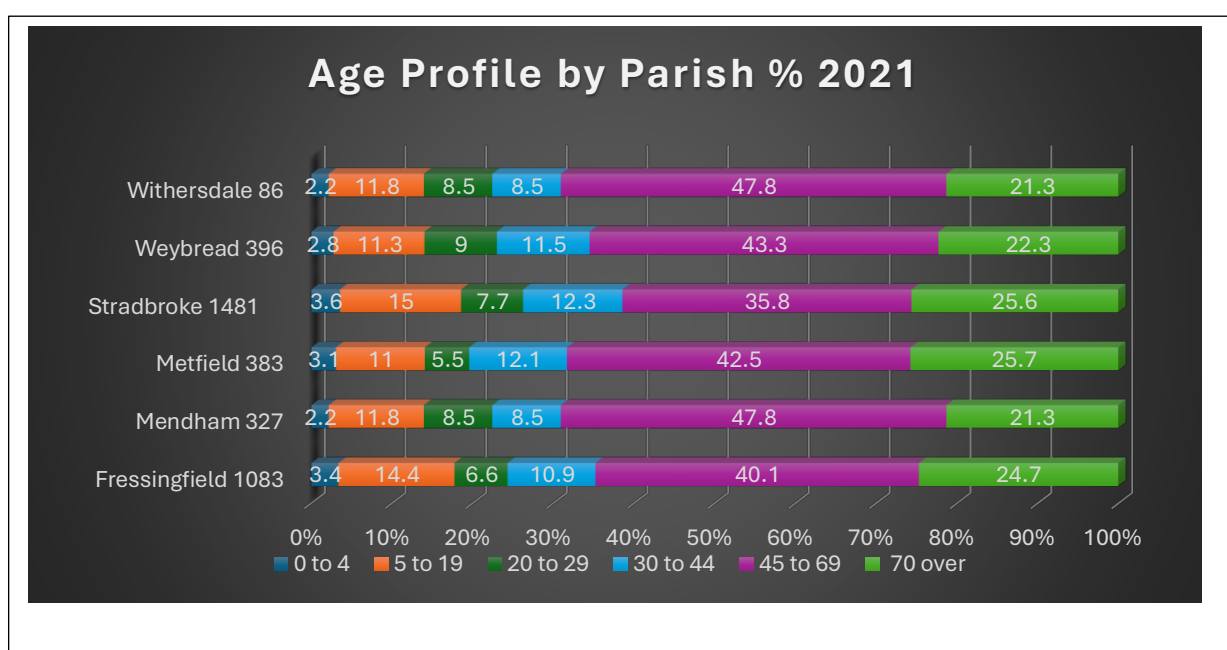
This is a Grade 1 Norman Church and its history and ongoing restoration feature in a recently published Guide. Income from collections at services, the box in the church and planned regular giving generally covers the day to day running costs but, with no amenities and a rather isolated position, fund-raising has to be low key. Our small but dedicated PCC is working to raise funds for restoration of the church porch and quinquennial inspection obligations, including the issue of damp.

In conclusion, we are a dedicated group of worshippers, deeply connected with God, and offer a new Rector firm friendship, support in the role and a happy PCC.

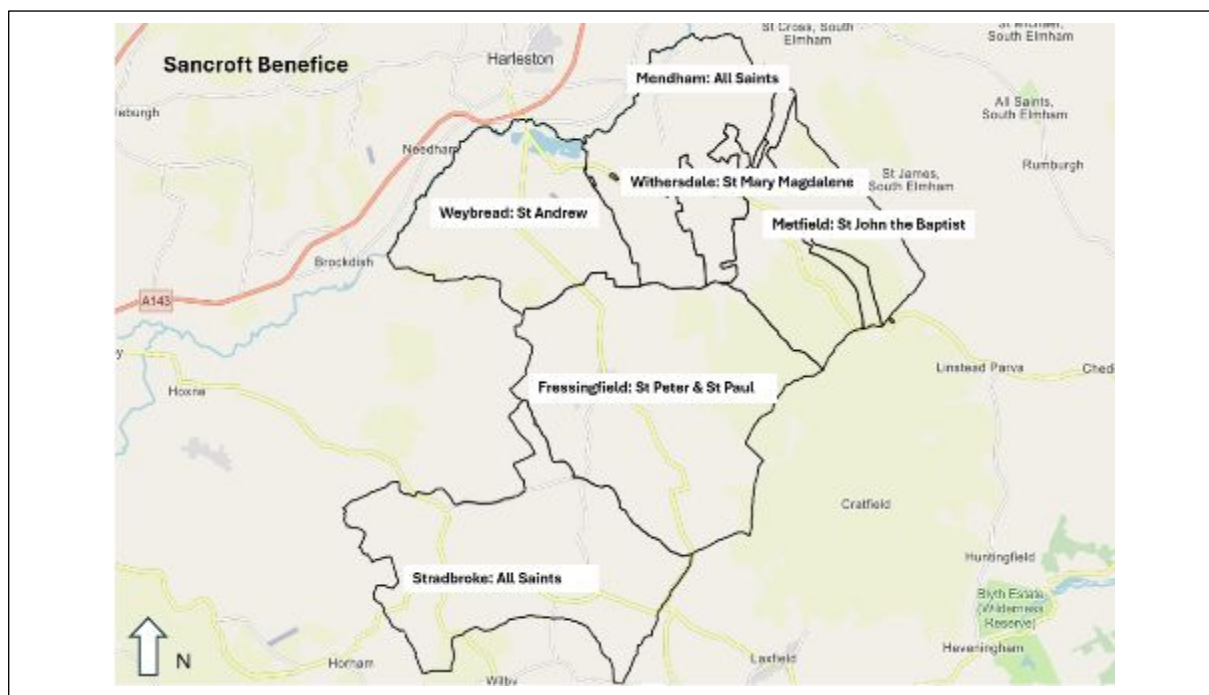
PARISH STATISTICS 2021 CENSUS



- More than 50% of people in all parishes identify as Christian
- 60% of the population is over the age of 45
- Apparent affluence can mask rural poverty and deprivation



THE SANCROFT BENEFICE, SUFFOLK



Fressingfield, Mendham, Metfield, Stradbroke, Weybread, Withersdale

Distances from the rectory at Stradbroke

Ipswich 25 miles (Diocesan office)

Norwich 25 miles

Suffolk Coast 21 miles

Bury St Edmunds 30 miles (Cathedral)

Diss 9 miles (train station)

London Liverpool Street 90 mins



St Edmundsbury Cathedral from the Abbey Gardens

THE RECTORY



The rectory, close to the centre of the village of Stradbroke, is set in a large garden. The ground floor accommodation comprises a sitting room, dining room, second reception and study. The kitchen has a range of units with a separate utility cupboard and a downstairs cloakroom. The first floor has four bedrooms and there is a bathroom with a separate WC. The property has solar panels and oil central heating.



STRADBROKE

Stradbroke is a large village, equidistant between Norwich and Ipswich and in easy reach of the Suffolk coast. Stradbroke's many amenities include a well-stocked shop, bakery, post office, library, swimming pool and gym, doctor's surgery, prescription pharmacy and Community Centre. Both Stradbroke CE Primary and Stradbroke High Schools serve the surrounding villages for Mid-Suffolk.

LOCAL INFORMATION

Schools

There are three good primary schools in the benefice at Fressingfield, Mendham and Stradbroke, two of them CofE. There is one high school at Stradbroke with other good schools nearby such as:

Harleston Sancroft Academy
Hartismere High School, Eye
Thomas Mills, Framlingham

Hospitals

Ipswich Hospital, West Suffolk Hospital and Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital are roughly the same distance from Stradbroke.

Crematoriums

These are located at:

Waveney Memorial Park, Ellough, Beccles;
Seven Hills Crematorium, Nacton, Ipswich and
West Suffolk Crematorium, Risby, Bury St Edmunds

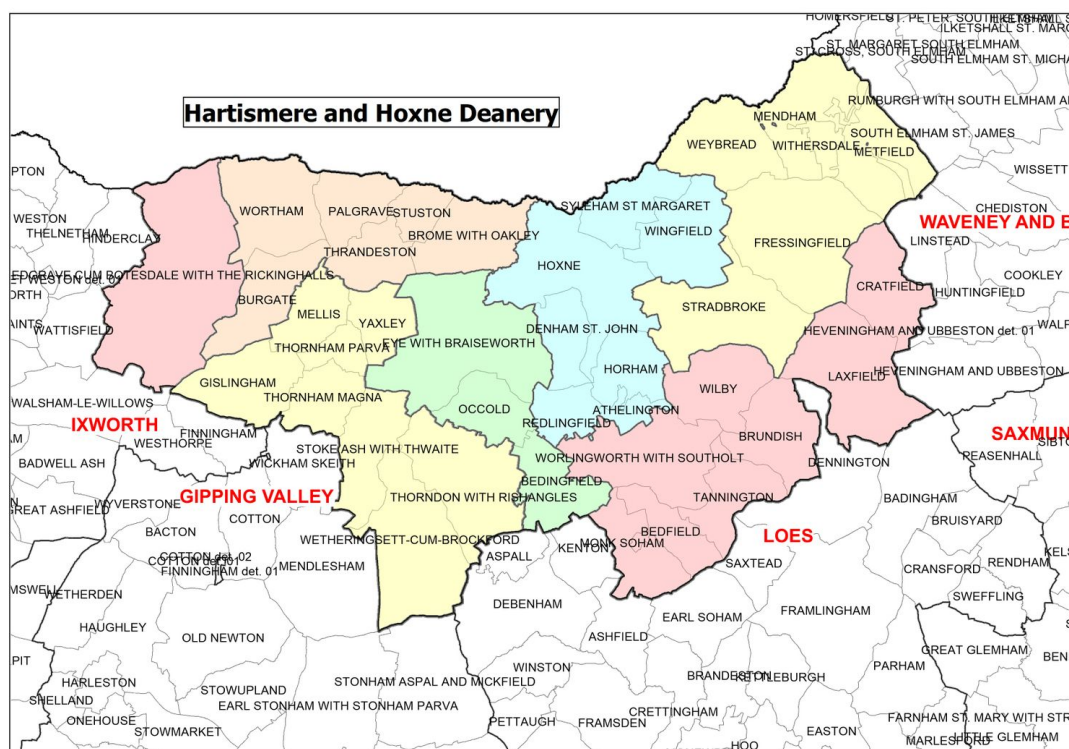
THE DEANERY

Working together to make a difference

Hartismere and Hoxne Deanery in north Suffolk comprises 39 parishes in six benefices, all very rural apart from the small town of Eye.

- Our objectives are:
 - the encouragement and release of gifts and vocations
 - the development of discipleship and spirituality
 - community engagement and the growth of work with families
- There are regular chapter meetings which support clergy and provide opportunities for learning and praying together
- The deanery benefits from supportive SSMs, active priests with PTO and committed lay elders
- Benefices are actively encouraged to have their own plans for growth, to contribute to a deanery plan within the overall diocesan vision
- Churches of the deanery meet for some shared services such as Ash Wednesday, Ascension and Lammas
- Deanery Synod meets three times a year: business is handled efficiently with a focus on invited speakers or discussion on a variety of interesting and relevant subjects
- Meetings are well attended with time for fellowship over refreshments

We are excited about the future, believing that this is a time for growth. Come and join us in God's mission in this beautiful part of Suffolk: we look forward to working with you!



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 Dr Joanne Woolway Grenfell is the diocesan Bishop. 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.

Growing in God

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 Plan for growth 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.

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.

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 lay 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'.