

STOURHEAD BENEFICE NEWS

Editor: Sue Davison - 01440 705829 - suzannedavison747@yahoo.co.uk

October & November 2026



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**



BARNARDISTON - GREAT BRADLEY - LITTLE BRADLEY - KEDINGTON
GREAT THURLOW - LITTLE THURLOW - GREAT WRATTING - LITTLE WRATTING

Fr Christopher Giles is on sabbatical until mid-October 2026.

Until then, for parish related enquiries, contact your local Churchwarden.

Other enquiries may be directed to a member of the Ministry Team.

See inside front cover for contact details.



MINISTRY TEAM

Father Chris Giles
(after mid-October) 01440 762901

Jill Davis 01440 713137

Ruth Hopper 01440 783125

Peter Smith 01440 783278

Mary Upton 01440 706237

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Officers; Ruth Hopper
and Naomi Shelmerdine 07902 859169

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Fr Chris's day off is Friday.

In an emergency contact one of the Ministry Team

Churchwardens

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Les Jobson 01440 786568

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Editor: Sue Davison – 01440 705829 – suzannedavison747@yahoo.co.uk

Deadline for next issue (December/January) 15 November 2026

The Stourhead Benefice is grateful to Barnardiston School for printing the Benefice News.

Cover photograph Buddy in Scotland taken by Fr Chris Giles

An interview with Fr Chris Giles

As Fr Chris is on sabbatical, there is no article from him in this edition. However, here is an interview with Fr Chris by Beatrice Kendrick who is a Media and English Language Student at the University of Liverpool.

Recently I interviewed Father Chris about his life as a priest for Kedington and the surrounding villages. As we spoke, I felt as if I got a real understanding of what led Father Chris down this path, the passion he has for our communities and the commitment to the role. In this short interview it covers a range of topics from a typical day in the life, some of the hidden spots in the different villages and most importantly Father Chris' favourite thing to eat at the church coffee mornings!

What is a typical day in your life?

"I don't think there is a typical day," he laughs. "You can start the day thinking you've got nothing planned until the afternoon, and then the phone starts ringing, someone needs visiting, or something comes up."

However, there are some routines that help provide structure. Father Chris often begins at around seven or half past seven with a walk with the dogs, followed by opening the local church and looking after the chickens.

"I try to be in my clericals by nine," he explains. "Otherwise, you'll get a surprise when there is a knock at the door. Even if I've been working in my study for an hour in my pyjamas, it looks like I've only just got up!"

The morning dog walk is about more than simply getting some exercise.

"That's often my first time of prayer during the day," he says. "It gives me time to think and pray before everything else begins."

The rest of the week can vary enormously. As well as Father Chris's responsibilities across eight churches, he is also involved with local schools as a governor and wellbeing liaison. There is also administration to complete, churchyards to manage, services to prepare and, of course, unexpected visits and phone calls.

"I'm probably at my best early in the morning," he says. "I like to get on with things and focus, but ministry doesn't always work like that. You can have a plan for the day, but it rarely works out exactly as you expect."

What prompted your job change later in life?

Before entering the ministry Father Chris worked in site management and construction, but over time he felt himself being drawn in another direction.

When asked what prompted the change, his answer is simple: “God.”

However, the journey towards ordination was a gradual one.

A particularly important experience came when his son was seriously ill in hospital. While spending time with his son, he observed the work of the hospital chaplains.

“I remember the chaplain opening the door, looking around the ward, and then leaving,” he recalls. “I wanted to speak to him, but he had gone. Maybe he was busy or tired, but it happened a number of times.” That experience stayed with him.

Later, when he became a volunteer chaplain at the Southend University Hospital, he made a point of being available to everyone.

“I would go by every bed. I would smile at people and see if they wanted to engage with me. I carried newspapers and other things with me so that there was always an opportunity for conversation. It was about being available without being intrusive.”

This experience eventually led him towards ordination. At the same time, he had also spent time helping within outreach work with homeless communities in London and Essex.

Gradually, he began reducing his hours in construction to spend more time helping others.

“It felt like I was being gently taken away from the career I was doing,” he explains.

Eventually, conversations with his vicar and others encouraged him to speak to the Bishop and begin the process of discernment.

“It was a strange time,” he says. “I wasn’t particularly focused on exactly where I wanted to end up. It was more that I felt I was being led there.”

Before long, he had left his career in construction and was studying theology in Cambridge while preparing for ministry. For a total of eight years, Fr Chris went from being volunteer chaplain at the hospital to being employed by them alongside his ministry in Thorpe Bay Southend on Sea.

What skills have been transferable from one job to another?

Although construction and ministry may seem like completely different careers, many of the skills he developed in his previous work have proved surprisingly useful.

“The discernment process is partly about looking at your life experience and thinking about what you can bring into ministry,” he explains.

His experience as a father, his hospital work and the outreach with homeless communities have all helped shape the way he approaches his role.

There are also some more practical benefits.

“I can pick up some maintenance work around the churches,” he says. “And, sadly, everything comes down to money sometimes, so being able to do some things ourselves can save the church money.”

His experience in management and leading teams has also transferred directly into working with churchwardens, PCC members and the wider ministry team.

“There are definitely transferable skills,” he says.

What is your favourite thing about Kedington?

Having previously lived and worked in busier and more deprived areas, including Basildon and Southend, one of the things he appreciates most about life in Kedington and the surrounding villages is the tranquillity.

“The peace of the village is something really special,” he says.

“In previous places there was always traffic, noise or aeroplanes. Here, I can stop and listen to nature.”

Despite Kedington having a population of more than 2,000 people, he feels it still has the peaceful atmosphere of a much smaller village.

“It’s lovely that there are events which bring people together, but you can still walk around and experience that sense of peace.”

For him, stillness has become something particularly important.

“Even when life is busy and your mind is spinning, sometimes you just need to stop and listen. Stillness is a gift.”

What are the favourite secret spots to go to in the villages surrounding us?

When asked if there were any secret spots in the area that people might not know about, he was happy to share one of his favourites — although he jokes that there may now be a queue of people wanting to visit.

In Kedington's new churchyard, along the line of trees near the old wall separating the two churchyards, there is a quiet spot that he and Laura, his wife, have cleared.

“It’s a beautiful place to watch the sunset,” he says.

The churchyard is surrounded by trees, and the spot offers a peaceful view across the fields.

“We’ll often just go there and watch the sunset.”

Another favourite location is near Great Bradley Church, where the views across the surrounding countryside provide another peaceful place to sit with a coffee, read a book or think about the week's sermon.

And, unsurprisingly for someone who values peace and stillness, anywhere near flowing water is also a favourite.

“There’s something about just sitting and watching the river flow,” he says.

What is your favourite thing to eat at the Kedington village church coffee mornings?

The church holds a coffee morning on Tuesdays and it has become an important part of community life. When asked what his favourite thing on the menu is, he immediately chooses the savoury option.

“The bacon and cheese wraps,” he says. “Although I do enjoy a good-quality coffee as well!”

However, the café is about far more than food and drink. “It brings some revenue into the church, which is important,” he explains, “but better than that, it gives people a place to come.” Regulars visit every week, while new people also continue to discover the café.

For him, one of the greatest joys is simply meeting people and being available to them.

“It gives people the opportunity to come and talk,” he says. “Sometimes people want help, sometimes they want to arrange a baptism, a wedding or a funeral, and sometimes they simply want someone to talk to.”

In many ways, the coffee morning has become an informal office — but a much more relaxed one.

“It means people can approach me naturally,” he explains. “They can sit down, have a coffee and, if they need to, come and speak to me privately.”

And perhaps that reflects the wider approach he takes to his ministry: being present, being available and making space for people — whether that is in a hospital ward, a church, a village café or simply a quiet spot watching the sunset.

Buddy is also on sabbatical this month.
Here he is enjoying the beach in Scotland





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A Cardboard Cathedral

As many of you will know I completed a 3-week whirlwind tour of New Zealand in May. Three weeks was not long enough, and I plan on saving my pennies and going back to see places that we missed and those where we did not have enough time to see 'everything'.

There were many highlights, favourite places. The scenery was breathtaking. The one thing that I did not enjoy were the sand flies, who seemed to find myself and Siân particularly tasty. I did not try zip wires, bungee jumping or white-water rafting.

How many of us followed Artemis II on its journey around the moon? I saw the Milky Way - spectacular, magnificent, mind-blowing. I have photos which do not do it justice but just ask if you would like to see them.

The further south we went the colder it got – which makes sense when you think the next stop is Antarctica. Ernest Shackleton sailed there from Christchurch. Christchurch was our last stop and the place we spent most time – 3 days!

Cathedrals usually stand as enduring monuments to human skill and inventiveness, and magnificent pointers to the presence of God among us. Their websites will tell you how they are the oldest, the largest, the tallest or the most significant of their kind.

Christchurch Cathedral is slightly different. You may remember that the Cathedral was badly damaged in the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011 – the neo-Gothic Cathedral was cracked, the tower collapsed, and the rose window destroyed. No one lost their life in the Cathedral but 185 people were killed and many more injured.

There is now a 'temporary' Cathedral, the Transitional Cathedral. The plan is, when the old Cathedral is repaired, to give it to the community. It is also known as the Cardboard Cathedral because it is the world's only cathedral made substantially of cardboard.

Taking two years to build it was one of the first new buildings to be completed after the quake. It has a polished concrete floor, metal shipping containers at the base of the walls and then waves of cardboard tubes under a polycarbonate roof.

The roof is slightly asymmetrical, higher and narrower at the front drawing your eye from the back to the cross above the altar, which is also made from cardboard tubes as are the choir stalls, the pulpit and some of the other furniture. Looking to the back you see a wonderful, stained glass mosaic (it was originally going to be polycarbonate) made up of enlarged transfers from the original window. It is a spectacular multifunctional space used by the congregation and the local community. Full of light, a sense of peace (when we were there), a sense of Presence.

We bemoan the condition of some of our churches. What would we do if they were made unusable by an 'Act of God'?

The Cardboard Cathedral may not be the oldest, the largest or the tallest but I would argue that it is most significant, the only one of its kind. If you are passing through, I highly recommend a visit.

As a visitor I was given a bookmark with this prayer. As we seek to become more 'earth friendly' in our buildings and churchyards, maybe it is something we could adapt to give to visitors in our churches.

A prayer for visitors

God of my journey, of tourist and pilgrim.

Thank you for bringing me to this Transitional Cathedral.

May its beauty, light and peace remind me of you.

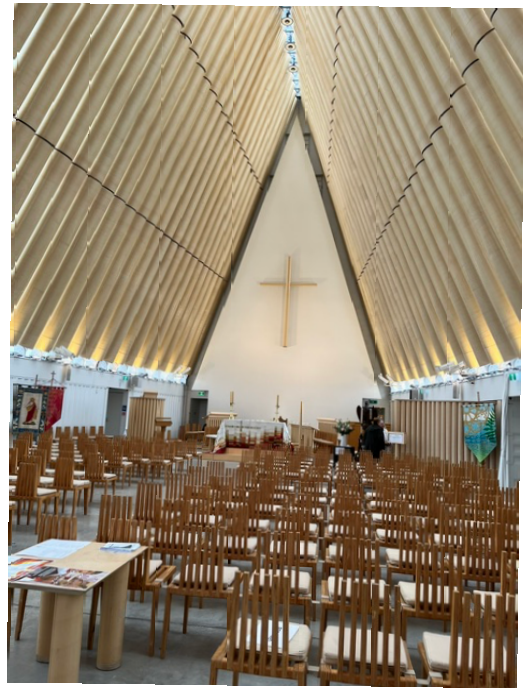
As its cardboard pillars soar above, may my prayers reach heavenward.

As its earth-friendly materials are light upon the earth, may my footprint be also.

All this I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, whose love is forever.

Amen

Ruth Hopper



The Cardboard Cathedral, Christchurch, New Zealand.



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New Guides by local journalist

You may have noticed some new guides appearing in our churches. These are being prepared by Marion Welham. Here is a short biography from Marion.

Born and brought up in Suffolk, journalism has been my lifelong career.

I began as a trainee with the National Council for the Training of Journalists at Harlow College, sponsored by Eastern Counties Newspapers, now Newsquest, where I learned key skills in media law, local government, news writing and shorthand. It later gave me the basis to specialise in maritime journalism, first at Seatrade Magazine, now part of Informa, then at Lloyd's List newspaper, where I became deputy features editor. My work took me on major overseas writing assignments from Iceland to Brazil over a period of 20 years.

Wanting to branch out into other subjects, I launched myself into a freelance career, contributing to the Sunday Times and Saturday Telegraph supplements as well as the Guardian and a range of national magazines such as Country Living, Homes & Antiques, and the RHS Garden magazine.

Brought up by keen gardeners in mid Suffolk, I was keen to develop this subject and completed an advanced Royal Horticultural Society course. I secured a one-year contract with Sky for a weekly gardening column on a pilot website for over 50s and gardening remains a favourite pastime whenever I have free time.

As a key writer for a major East of England tourism campaign, I began to see the potential of bringing the general public into our remarkable medieval churches. I was awarded a contract for the post of Support Officer for English Heritage (now Historic England). This gave me the opportunity to secure Heritage Lottery funding for a churches tourism project I had created called Angels & Pinnacles. It was launched in March 2012 by the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich as 'a new way of discovering the heritage on your doorstep' and open to all churches willing to remain unlocked to welcome visitors of all faiths or none. It also provided funding for volunteers to learn how to interpret the heritage of their church buildings without overwhelming visitors with too much information.

The following year I was invited to write a monthly column in the EADT called Selig Suffolk which continued for three years. My ongoing freelance work also included copywriting for the Diocese of Norwich and helping churches secure Heritage Lottery funding for their projects, as well as regular contributions to Great British Life and Suffolk Norfolk Life magazines.

I have attended media design courses in Adobe professional creative software which, along with my journalism skills, enables me to offer affordable publicity and learning materials from start to finish. This has included material for Ipswich Choral Foundation and a lively children's activity pack for the Stowmarket bells project.

Six-page easy guides with floor plans started with Needham Market 'Medieval Masterpiece' project and Southwold. More recently I've worked on guides for churches in the Stourhead Benefice which has been a joy as well as an honour and a privilege.

marionwelham.co.uk

Marion has completed the A3 guides for Great Bradley, Little Thurlow and Great Thurlow. Kedington's guide is in production.

If any of the other churches would like a similar guide, contact Marion for more details.



All Saints and All Souls Service

Remembering our faithful departed

Sunday 1 November 2026

4pm at St Peter and St Paul's Church Kedington

*A quiet and reflective service to remember and give thanks
for those we have loved and lost.*



*If you would like the name of a loved one who is no longer with us
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please contact Fr Chris Giles 01440 762901 stourheadbenefice@gmail.com*

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Cash prizes * Over 18's only

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Saturday 21 November 2026 from 2pm
Kedington Community Centre, Arms Lane

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For more information: Lol Farr 704179
 Jill Davis 713137

Donations of bottles, books, toys, games, preserves, nearly new items and raffle prizes may be left in the church. Donations of cakes can be brought to the Community Centre after 12noon on 21 November.



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Poppies Galore!

Back in 2018 we commemorated the end of the First World War in many and varied ways. The Kedington Churchwarden at the time, Beryl Bracken was one of the people who mobilised dozens of knitters to knit poppies. We had hundreds of poppies.

The same year, our local uniformed groups had made all sorts of poppies which were hung around the church both inside and out.



One Saturday morning in early November a team of people gathered in the church to attach the poppies to a piece of netting. This was then hung on the outside of the church for Remembrance.





Over the next few years, the knitted poppies were hung up in time for Remembrance. But as time went on, they didn't fare so well outside, so we cut the netting into smaller pieces and hung the poppies inside the church.



In 2025, it was clear that something needed to be done to present the poppies in a better format. So, they were removed from the netting.

A piece of linen fabric was purchased by Daphne Smith in memory of her late husband, Barry. Local seamstress, Tracy Duke, hemmed the fabric and made ties to attach it safely to the church fittings.



Since the beginning of August, a team of needleworkers have been sewing the poppies on to the fabric, ready to hang them in Kedington Church for the Remembrance Service on 8 November 2026.

Thank you to Daphne, Tracy and all the knitters and sewers who have worked on this project over the years.

Jill Davis

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Events Diary

Date	Time	Event and Venue
Sunday 4 October	12noon	“Bring and Share” Harvest Lunch after Harvest Festival Family Service, which is at 11am in St Peter and St Paul’s Church, Kedington.
Friday 9 October	Doors Open 19.00	Kedington Church Bingo. See poster page 15.
Saturday 17 October	18.30	Linton Jazz as part of Haverhill and District Youth for Christ AGM at Castle Manor School. See poster page 18.
Sunday 1 November	16.00	All Souls Service at St Peter and St Paul’s Kedington. See page 13.
Sunday 21 November	14.00	Kedington Christmas Fayre at Kedington Community Centre, Arms Lane, Kedington. CB9 7QQ. See poster on page 17.
Weekly Events		
Tuesdays	10.00 - 12noon	“Dolce Gusto” Coffee Morning at St Peter and St Paul’s Church, Kedington
Thursdays	1400 – 16.00	Centre Café at Kedington Community Centre, Arms Lane, Kedington. CB9 7QQ

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Gospel Readings during October

4	Harvest	John 4 v 31 – 36
11	Nineteenth after Trinity	Matthew 22 v 1 – 14
18	St Luke	Luke 10 v 1 – 9
25	Bible Sunday	Matthew 24 v 30 – 35

Gospel Readings during November

1	All Saints	Matthew 5 v 1 – 12
8	Remembrance	To be confirmed
15	Second Sunday before Advent	Matthew 25 v 14 -30
22	Sunday before Advent Christ the King	Matthew 25 v 31 – 46

SWITCHING TO YEAR B

29	First Sunday of Advent	Mark 13 v 24 – 37
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Gospel Readings during December

6	Second Sunday of Advent	Mark 1 v 1 – 8
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Evening Prayer on Mondays

Monday Evening Prayer is held at St Peter and St Paul's Kedington at 5pm
(except on Bank Holidays).

All are welcome to join this short, intimate service as we pray for the world,
the Church, our communities and ourselves.



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Access to the churches in Stourhead Benefice

Great Bradley, Great Thurlow, Kedington, Little Wrattling and Little Thurlow each have a ramp that is put in place when needed.

Great Wrattling does not have a ramp but the step into the church is quite shallow, however the slope to the church gate is steep. Arrangements could be made for wheelchair users to park in the Rectory and access the churchyard through the side gate but this is across grass.

Little Bradley does not have a ramp. The step into the church is 4 inches deep. Barnardiston does not have a ramp and the entry into the church requires stepping over a raised threshold.

Home Communion – Pastoral Care

The Blessed Sacrament is perpetually reserved for the Communion of the housebound, the sick and dying. Please inform a member of the Ministry Team of parishioners who are sick or in hospital, and those who are in need of pastoral care. The Sacrament of Reconciliation by arrangement.

Baptisms: We welcome into God's family Eden Mills who was baptised at All Saints Church Little Bradley on 23 August and Clementine Offer who was also baptised at All Saints Church Little Bradley on 27 September.

Weddings: Rebecca French and Daniel Bradnam were married on 8 August St Peter and St Paul's Church Kedington. Rhiannon Beal and Christopher Wait were married at All Saints Church Great Thurlow also on 8 August 2026. Natalie Boreham and Nicholas Coull were married at St Peter and St Paul's Church Kedington on 15 August.

Funerals: Interment of the late Laurence Cullen took place in St Peter and St Paul's Churchyard, Kedington on 5 August, after a funeral service at Clare Priory.

The funeral of the late Fred Gowers took place at St Peter and St Paul's Church Kedington on 10 August.

The funeral of the late Jean Watson took place at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Kedington on 17 August, followed by interment in churchyard. The Burial of the Ashes of the late Mrs Margaret Smith took place at St Mary's, Great Bradley on 27 August.

'May they rest in peace and rise in glory'

Thinking of a christening or a wedding in church? Please take a look at our Benefice website where there is useful information about both baptisms and weddings.

Holy Communion

Sharing of the common cup is now permitted. Good hygiene practices are maintained at Holy Communion. Gluten-free Communion wafers are available – please ask before the service begins.

SERVICE ROTA

October 2026			
Sun 4	10.00	Little Bradley	Sung Eucharist – Harvest Festival
	11.00	Kedington	Family Service – Harvest Festival
Sun 11	08.00	Kedington	Said Eucharist – Nineteenth after Trinity
	10.00	Great Thurlow	Sung Eucharist – Nineteenth after Trinity
Sun 18	10.00	Great Wratting	Sung Eucharist – St Luke
	10.00	Little Thurlow	Family Service – St Luke
Sun 25	10.00	Great Bradley	Sung Eucharist – Bible Sunday
	16.00	Kedington	Evensong – Bible Sunday
November 2026			
Sun 1	10.00	Kedington	Sung Eucharist – All Saints
	16.00	Kedington	All Souls Service
Sun 8	08.00	Kedington	Said Eucharist
	10.50	Kedington	Remembrance
	10.50	Great Thurlow	Remembrance
Sun 15	10.00	Great Wratting	Sung Eucharist – Second before Advent
	16.30	Little Thurlow	Choral Evensong – Second before Advent
Sun 22	10.00	Great Bradley	Sunday before Advent – Christ the King
	16.00	Kedington	Evensong – Christ the King
Sun 29	10.00	Barnardiston	Sung Eucharist – First Sunday of Advent
	TBC	Little Wratting	To be confirmed
December 2026			
Sun 6	10.00	Little Bradley	Sung Eucharist – Second Sunday of Advent
	10.00	Kedington	Family Service – Christingle

Mid-week Said Eucharist at Kedington on Wednesdays at 10am