

The Rt. Rev'd Dr Jane Steen
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Dear Friends,

Interim Priest-in-Charge: Coxfords and Toftrees

Thank you for your interest in this post. We seek God's wisdom and grace to discern the person being called to this role, just as we are sure that you too seek God's call for your future ministry. I hope that reading the profile, accompanying material and these notes will assist you in that process.

The Group was faithfully served by its last incumbent for nearly 25 years, a man of great learning fondly remembered. We are now seeking a priest who will be a shepherd of the flock in the benefice, and who will seek actively to discern what is needful for thriving in the medium and long term. This will entail working well and creatively with deanery colleagues, lay and ordained, and an ability to bring people with you, helping them to envision the future and enabling them to see and to take the necessary steps to be the people and the parishes God is calling them to be. I discern a genuine love of their churches and the Group in the Coxfords and very much hope that the good work that has been done in the vacancy can continue so that the church is ever more at the heart of the villages.

You will see from the profile that this is an interim post. It is genuinely unclear whether future flourishing will be best served by some pastoral reorganisation. This is partly a question of whether or not the costs associated with the benefice having its own incumbent can be sustained, but it is also a wider question as, across the Diocese, we seek to ensure that rural ministry posts are such as to enable God to be praised, good relationships to be formed and social mission to be undertaken.

The Parishes and this ministry

There are eight parishes in the Coxfords Group, plus Toftrees : East Raynham, West Raynham, South Raynham, East Rudham, Tattersett, Tatterford, Helhoughton and Houghton, with Toftrees in the process of formally joining the Group. The population of the benefice is small, with a combined total of under 3,500 across all the parishes.

The profile does not hide from the challenges faced by the benefice. As their priest-in-charge, you will find people who have served the church with unchanging dedication for many years in a very beautiful part of rural Norfolk. They have expressed their commitment to working with their new priest and recognise the need for change in the benefice service pattern and that societal changes do impact the church. You will be a person of wisdom and patience, working with the parishes in prayerfully discerning and implementing vision and a new future. Ideas to consider would include introducing additional liturgical ministry to families and second homeowners in the area, recognising the value of traditional ministry (think of the popularity still of Christmas carol services), the rhythm of the liturgical year (Norwich is a very agricultural diocese) and the importance of a priest who knows and is known by the people of the benefice.

This Diocese and Deanery

The Diocese of Norwich's vision is to be Transformed by Christ: Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic.

The Priest-in-Charge of the Coxford Group will be someone who is excited by this vision and who is able to see ways in which it can be made a lived reality. That will entail collaborative working, and may involve working with Garden Church, our dispersed new worshipping communities across the Diocese which thrives under the auspices of the Garden Church Missional Communities Bishop's Mission Order. The Diocese of Norwich has embraced the national church's three strategic aims and are currently focusing on developing a younger and more diverse church, with a parish system revitalised for mission so that churches can reach and serve everyone in their community. We believe that this is the kind of mission which will resonate with our rural benefices, including the Coxford Group, and enable priests and people across the Diocese to work to a common end.

For more on our current life, see <https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Our-Life-Together-2023.pdf> and if you would like further information, <https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/about/about-vision/#:~:text=pastoral%20and%20prophetic.-,Our%20Life%20Together,every%20person%20in%20every%20place.>

The Coxford Group and Toftrees fall within the Archdeaconry of Lynn, and so under the care of the Bishop of Lynn and the Archdeacon of Lynn. The benefice is in the Burnham & Walsingham Deanery. The Rural Dean is the Revd Clive Wylie. Attendance at Deanery Synod and Chapter is an expectation, and all diocesan clergy are encouraged to give some part of their time and energies to the wider life of the Diocese.

Housing

The accommodation provided is described in the profile for the Benefice. Questions about the house should be directed to the Archdeacon of Lynn, The Venerable Catherine Dobson:

Archdeacon.lynn@dioceseofnorwich.org

Enquiries, Applications and Interviews

Completed application forms are to be submitted to Mrs Ann Whittet (PA to the Bishop and Archdeacon of Lynn), the Bishop's Office, Lynn House, Commercial Road, Dereham NR191AE.

The closing date for applications is Monday 15th July (9.00am) with interviews to be held on Thursday 26th September.

Any priest wanting an informal discussion before deciding whether to apply is welcome to be in touch by telephone or e-mail with the Archdeacon.

With best wishes

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jane Steen', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Revd Dr Jane Steen
Bishop of Lynn