

NORTH BOSMERE BENEFICE PROFILE



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich



North Bosmere Benefice Profile

Are you our next Rector?

Thank you for your interest. We offer a warm welcome, strong spiritual and practical support, the joy of worshipping together and of spreading the Good News, and our willingness to rise to a challenge.

Our hopes and aims

We share the diocesan Growing in God priorities. Within these we are especially keen to be Growing Younger: we wish to step up our engagement with children, young people and families so that we better reflect the age profile of our communities. We feel that working to bring children and younger adults to faith should be a top priority, especially given the presence of two church schools in the benefice. As a church we should reach out as much as possible to our communities in 'practical' as well as 'spiritual' ways and we are open to 'Fresh Expressions' of worship alongside our more traditional services. We seek to appoint a new incumbent who shares this vision.



Palm Sunday - Walk and Worship

Our new Rector

We are praying for a new Rector who will work with us in a 'growth' agenda, who will be an enthusiastic enabler and motivator, who will get out and about to meet as many people as possible, and who is keen to work with youngsters. Someone who:

- * is pastorally sensitive with a clear and deeply rooted Christian faith, confident to share this with others.
- * likes to work collaboratively, and who will value and develop our ministry teams, PCCs and the work of lay people.
- * is approachable and flexible, happy engaging with people from all walks of life and able to inspire those who are currently not part of the church community.
- * will actively promote the Christian faith in our primary schools and foster their relationships with the church, and who will support and encourage families, children and young adults in their involvement with our churches.
- * has respect and sympathy for a variety of worship styles and an ecumenical outlook.
- * is a good communicator and who will inspire through preaching and worship and help us develop our faith through study and prayer.
- * has good organisational and time management skills, able to prioritise, involve others and delegate.
- * will open our eyes to new opportunities in worship, ministry and mission and who will work with us to develop these areas of our church life.
- * given the size of our benefice, has the ability to drive.

What we offer

Our commitment to our new incumbent

- * Practical and prayerful support
- * A committed body of church members who are friendly and welcoming.
- * Support from our SSM, Readers, Lay Elders, Churchwardens and PCCs.
- * Willingness to continue a practice where each parish takes responsibility for the practicalities of ministry, worship and compliance.
- * Time and opportunity to nurture your personal faith, as well as that of the church and wider community. We recognise the challenge of ministering to the needs of eight rural parishes and will support you in achieving a good work / life balance so that your time with us will be enjoyable and rewarding for you and for us.
- * Full payment of approved expenses and the provision of part time administrative support if required.
- * Open to exploring exciting possibilities for the future.

The Rectory, Stonham Aspal

The Rectory is located in The Street, Stonham Aspal and is a two minute walk from the church and primary school. The detached property was built in 1967 and consists of: hall entrance, study, sitting room, cloakroom, dining room, fitted kitchen, four bedrooms (two with hand basins), family bathroom and separate WC with basin. The Rectory was fully double-glazed in 2014 and a new oil-fired heating boiler was fitted at the same time. Additionally, there are photo-voltaic panels on the roof. There is a single garage, parking for several vehicles and large front and rear gardens.



Our Worship

Patterns of worship continue to evolve to balance needs, aspirations and resources and increasing numbers of worshippers travel across parish boundaries. Most churches have three services in a typical month, generally in Common Worship format with a few BCP services, and we join together for Holy Communion as a benefice when there is a fifth Sunday in the month. Individual parishes also combine on special occasions such as Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Rogation. A Band and a Choir draw members from across the parishes for benefice services, Christmas, Easter, Harvest Festival and Songs of Praise celebrations. Appendix 1 shows the basic monthly template for our worship in 2023. We are open to other forms of service (particularly those which might encourage higher attendance by families and children) and different monthly patterns. During 2023, 4 baptisms, 1 wedding and 20 funerals were held across the benefice.



Benefice pilgrimage to Iona

Our Benefice

The **North Bosmere Benefice** is in a beautiful rural area of Suffolk, east of Stowmarket and north-west of Ipswich. It contains ten villages and eight ecclesiastical parishes - Creeting St. Mary, Creeting St. Peter, Coddendam, Crowfield, Earl Stonham with Stonham Parva, Gosbeck, Hemingstone, and Stonham Aspal and Mickfield. The eight parishes were grouped under a single priest-in-charge in 2014 and since then we have increasingly benefitted from our co-operation and joint worship. We can now genuinely speak of a sense of Christian community at the benefice as well as the parish level. In 2021 our status as a benefice was confirmed, with the incumbent as Rector.

Though not strictly a church publication, the monthly Ten Village News magazine includes an article by the Rector and details of services and church contacts. The churches are all valued by their local communities as inspirational buildings, as centres of community activity and worship and because of the involvement of so many church members in village life.

The benefice is roughly seven miles square and has a population of approximately 4,500. Census data indicates that the area has a relatively low population density, without extremes of wealth or deprivation and with a higher than average proportion of the population aged 45 or over. For urban facilities we mainly look to Ipswich, county town of Suffolk and one of the oldest towns in the country, and Stowmarket, a historic market town on the River Gipping. The surrounding area contains many beautiful villages, and the coast and the Sandlings heaths and forest just inland from it are within easy reach for sailing, walking and bird watching (notably RSPB Minsmere). Ipswich offers a wide range of cultural events and Snape Maltings near Aldeburgh has a world-renowned concert hall.

Medical practices are located nearby in Debenham and Needham Market and there are two primary schools within the benefice and several secondary schools within easy reach. The economy is growing away from its agricultural roots, with the establishment of new centres of employment, mainly along the A14 corridor between Ipswich and Cambridge.

The Rector and PCCs receive valuable support from the Deanery, the Archdeacon of Sudbury and the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich. **The Deanery of Gipping Valley** has 41 parishes with a total population of around 22,000. Deanery clergy work closely to support each other through the deanery chapter, and the deanery synod meets regularly.

Church of England Schools

We have two Church of England Voluntary Aided primary schools within the benefice and the Rector is a governor of both. Other members of our congregations also serve on the governing bodies. Church inspection reports (SIAMS) for Stonham Aspal (2024) and Creeting St. Mary (2017) praised their quality of Christian vision, religious education, collective worship and partnerships with local churches. We see the links between these schools, their parishes and the wider benefice as vitally important to the future of our Christian communities. Both schools welcome visits by the Rector and regularly hold services in their local churches.



Charities

The Rector is a trustee of the Stonham Aspal Charities (The Metcalf Educational Foundation, Metcalf General Charity, The Olivier Trust and The Stonham Aspal Sick and Poor Fund) and the Coddendam-based Gardemau Trust.

Our churches

Our churches are all Grade 1 or 2* listed. We have successfully risen to the challenge of modernising facilities, maintaining the fabric and making the buildings welcoming and well suited to our worship, at the same time as paying our full Parish Share. The church of St Mary the Virgin in Stonham Parva is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust and occasional services are held there. Our churches are greatly valued by non-churchgoers as well as worshippers, and we are very keen to encourage people to come through our doors. Concerts, flower festivals and coffee mornings are well attended. We also reach out beyond the church buildings through our fortnightly Soup Lunches aimed at the 'retired' age group. These include a short act of worship and are regularly attended by 25 to 30.



Soup and Service

St Mary's, Coddendam

The parish of Coddendam, with a population of just over 500, has a very friendly and active community. Villagers and others from the parish and beyond meet at the church, community-run village shop, country club and modern community centre as well as in the Mary Day Centre where there are twenty sheltered housing units centred on Haysel House, the former rectory. A monthly communion service is held in the meeting room there. Our dynamic Community Response Group works with the Parish Council for the benefit of parishioners and St. Mary's is very actively involved, including taking the lead in running a Baby and Toddlers group. A biennial Scarecrows and Open Gardens festival, workdays on communal areas and a wide range of other events all enhance our local community spirit.



A brass band concert in Coddendam Church

There are 28 parishioners on the electoral roll and we are always delighted to welcome worshippers who join us from other parishes, especially for our monthly service of Holy Communion. In the same spirit, we enjoy worshipping in other local churches when there is no service in Coddendam. Members of the regular congregation ensure that occasional worshippers are warmly welcomed when they join us on church festivals, Remembrance Sunday and Harvest Festival as well as when there are baptisms as part of the morning service. Our congregational singing is both hearty and tuneful and our fellowship is strengthened over coffee and biscuits after the services. The church (www.suffolkchurches.co.uk/coddendam.htm), remodelled in the 15th and 19th centuries, has areas at both the front and the back of the nave that are adaptable for different styles of worship and for social and cultural events.

A notable feature of the Coddendam community is the involvement of so many people offering their talents to the church, whether that be grass cutting, cleaning the church, flower arranging, taking responsibility for parts of the worship, providing coffee after the services, serving on the PCC, running the monthly Saturday 'Coffee and Chat' sessions or organising and running a range of social and fund-raising events. The church community in Coddendam is highly involved with local people who are not churchgoers, especially by ensuring that the church building is accessible, familiar and welcoming. As well as the monthly 'Coffee and Chat' our outreach includes concerts, drama productions and flower festivals, and the church is open every day. The churchyard that surrounds St. Mary's is carefully managed for its fauna and flora and the church has gained a bronze Eco Church Award.

The parish finances are in a good state. Contributions from regular donors by gift aid together with other offertory money is sufficient to pay day to day expenses, allowing all fund raising activities to raise money for the church fabric and for good causes. We are able to pay our Parish Share in full. Additionally, the Gardemau Church Charity provides investment income to be spent in the parish for the advancement of religion, the church fabric or in grants to the other Gardemau Charities for education and relief of the poor. We are currently making good progress with a campaign to raise £60,000 to fund masonry and window repairs.



Coffee mornings are a focus of village life

Creeting St Mary

Our church stands in a prominent position and can be seen from miles around particularly when floodlit for festivals. It is a Grade 2* listed building, with an open churchyard and the longest flint boundary wall in Suffolk. We have a series of very fine Kempe windows and a modern 1950's Brian Thomas window of the Nativity. Our churchyard is well managed with wildlife areas which Suffolk Wildlife Trust advise us on.

There is a small brick building adjacent to the Church known as the Vestry or Old School Room. It was built in 1837 as a school room before our village school was built in 1871. This building is very useful as it has toilet and kitchen facilities and is used as a meeting room. Work is being undertaken at the moment to repair and then hopefully update it.

We have a small but loyal congregation and visitors regularly join us on a Sunday. We also have refreshments which make the end of the morning very sociable. There are 33 people on our Electoral Roll. The village population is around 650 but growing rapidly with many new houses being built amongst the established ancient houses.

We have an excellent Church of England VAP school; staff, parents and children visit the Church for festivals and end of term services. Our Rector has a close working relationship with the school.



The school leavers' service

There is a well-appointed village hall, used by many groups; dance, yoga, pilates, W.I., parties, celebrations and wakes, soup lunches and a group for disabled adults who create, bake and find fellowship. Also in the village there is a regular patchwork group. The active social club opens the bar once a month and organises many activities during the year. At Christmas time they support disadvantaged children at the village school.

Behind the Village Hall there is a seven acre field called Blacksmiths Field. It has walks, a wildflower area, children's playground, adult balancing bars and a football pitch. It is a very attractive space and well used.

Our Church is supported by many people who live in the village and our regular churchyard tidy sessions and craft and tea afternoons bring people together. A highlight which many people enjoy is our carol service in December.

Our challenge going forward is to engage with the new people who come to live in the village and to welcome more children and young families regularly into Church.



Creeting St Peter

The church plays a vital role in bringing the community together in Creeting St Peter. The village has no pub, school or shop so the church and the Church Room provide the only opportunity for the community to come together on a regular basis. We have a small congregation of committed Christians and, in addition, we have good support from the wider population who have a strong sense of community.

The parish is small with a total population of less than 200. The earliest houses in the village are timber framed and date from the 16th century but most were built in the last 60 years. They are primarily privately owned with a few local authority and privately rented. There are 19 people on our electoral roll.

The church is Grade 1 listed and dates from the 11th century. It is separated from the village by a dual carriageway but despite its isolated position it remains open in daylight hours. The church and churchyard provide a place for reflection for many of the villagers and we have been very encouraged by messages left by visitors from further afield as well.



Candlelit Carol Service

Currently we have two services a month which are attended by people from the village and from other villages in the benefice. Special services, such as Mothering Sunday, Easter, Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, Toy and Gift and Christmas Eve Carols by Candlelight, are well supported by our community.

We hold monthly coffee mornings, two Ladies' Suppers and several Pub Nights each year in the Church Room, which have been a great success. In addition we organise an annual plant sale and at least one ad hoc event each year. Our aim has been two-fold with these events; firstly to raise money but also to increase the level of community involvement to encourage village engagement with the church. Hopefully this leads to increased financial contributions and giving of time to the church. As a church we have always supported the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust Annual *Ride and Stride* by welcoming participants to the Church and through gaining sponsorship.

A large proportion of families in Creeting St Peter send their children to Creeting St Mary CEVAP School. This is not the catchment school but parents are choosing a church school.

The PCC is small and friendly and it maintains a positive approach to the issues it has to deal with. Currently there is no Churchwarden so we share the responsibilities between us. We always pay our quota in full.

All Saints, Crowfield

The village of Crowfield is approximately 9 miles north of Ipswich. The earliest record of the village was in Anglo-Saxon times when it was a small settlement close to where All Saints Church stands. Over time the village developed and grew along the Roman road that connected Coddendam to Peasenhall so that the present day centre of Crowfield is viewed as the village along Stone Street. Only a single dwelling remains near where the village began.

This small church lies in a rural setting at the end of a 100 yard cart track. The church dates from the 14th Century. In the 19th Century an extensive restoration took place that uncovered sealed up windows. Since then, with the exception of renovating the spirelet in 2004, only essential maintenance work has been undertaken. The church has electricity but no other mains services although a composting toilet was built in the grounds in 2021. The church is often described by visitors as a “hidden gem”. The exterior might lead you to expect a rustic interior but instead you find opulence, delightful jewel-like glass and heavily engraved woodwork said to be the best restoration in Suffolk. In the west wall there is a glass set of Royal Arms, unique in the county.



At present, there are two services a month. In addition, there are a few special services during the year, such as the candlelit carol service on Christmas Eve which attracts over 100 visitors. Over the past five years 6 weddings, 3 baptisms and 12 funerals have taken place. The church electoral roll in 2023 was 19.

Every August Bank Holiday there is a three-day Flower Festival when the church is decorated with themed flower arrangements. In the churchyard we have refreshments, tombola, raffle, second hand books, jigsaws and locally made/grown produce for sale. This is the major fund-raising event for the church and it attracts people from throughout the county and beyond and made a net profit in 2023 of £4,800.

The congregation is small; fewer than 10 people regularly attend, but we are constantly seeking to grow this by re-establishing the church as an integral part of the village community.



Pet Service

Crowfield Village has around 150 households. There is a village hall and recreation ground, a garage with filling station, a pub, and a number of small businesses in the village. Crowfield has a good community spirit. The annual fete and flower show held in July regularly attracts 300-400 people, the funds raised being used to support village institutions including the church, the village hall, the WI, and other village events. The WI meets every month, we have a coffee morning every Monday and a craft group every Thursday in the village hall which also holds regular quiz nights, bingo, film nights and other community events.

You can learn more about the Church by visiting www.suffolkchurches.co.uk, the village web site, Wikipedia or Facebook.

St Mary's, Earl Stonham with Stonham Parva

The village of Earl Stonham (population c. 600) is spread out across the hamlets of Broad Green, Forward Green and Middlewood Green as well as houses on Angel Hill along the A140 Norwich Road. The centre is Forward Green which has the village hall, cricket club and recreation ground. The Faith Mission's south east of England camp centre is also located in the village.

Stonham Parva, otherwise known as Little Stonham (population c. 370), is a village about a mile north of Earl Stonham which has its own medieval church, now looked after by the Churches Conservation Trust, and a Baptist Community Church. It also has a pub located on the A140 Norwich Road.

St Mary's, Earl Stonham is a grade 1 listed medieval church located on the A1120 about a mile from the centre of the village. Notable features include the richly carved hammerbeam roof, which is mentioned in many church guides, and a medieval Doom painting above the chancel arch. In 2000 the bells were refurbished and lowered and kitchen facilities and a loo were installed in the base of the tower. The church is open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Across the churchyard (still in use), the Parish Room has its own kitchen and loos. The Parish Room is used for a monthly mid-week Holy Communion service and meetings, as well as being available for hire, and has in the past been used for a Sunday School. Currently there are normally Sunday services on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, one Holy Communion, one non-communion, as well as the monthly mid-week communion service which is typically attended by some of our more elderly members. The church usually hosts a World Day of Prayer service and the highlight of the year in terms of numbers is the annual Carol Service. There are generally also sizeable congregations for Harvest and on Remembrance Sunday, as well as for baptisms, weddings and funerals.

There is a Bible Study group (which has recently enjoyed the 'God's Big Picture' course and studied the book of Acts) and a monthly ecumenical prayer meeting, and monthly 'Coffee and Cake' mornings take place in the village hall. An 'Open the Book' team enacts Bible stories in Creting St Mary school. In Lent, a discussion group occurs. Over the past three years 'Hope Explored', 'Christianity Explored' and 'Hymns We Love' courses have also been held in the village hall, with attendees from across the benefice. There are 37 people on the electoral roll.

Each month, one Sunday collection is given to a different charity from a list agreed at the beginning of the year by the PCC, including Forward 2, an orphanage supported by the village in Kenya. We have always paid our diocesan parish share (currently c. £23,000), funded largely through regular giving. A 'Sunday School Fund' is available for the provision of religious education in the village and a recent legacy will facilitate repairs recommended by the Quinquennial Report.

Many of the congregation have taken on some responsibility for the running of the church and members are involved in other village organisations such as the WI, the parish council and the Earl Stonham Trust. We have a small group of bell ringers who ring for one of the Sunday services each month and for weddings.

St. Mary's, Stonham Parva is also a grade 1 listed medieval church, which since 1990 has been in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. A Rogation service, a Benefice Holy Communion service, a Choral Evensong and a Carol Service are held there each year.

St Mary's, Gosbeck

St Mary's Church, Gosbeck is one of the smaller churches in the benefice. It is situated away from the main village, also small with a population of 220 in approximately 90 houses. The church is on the Ipswich road so benefits from passing travellers between Ipswich and the central Suffolk villages. The church is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, but it is thought that it has Saxon origins. The lovingly tended churchyard has a wealth of wildflowers, with orchids in abundance. The South facing tower (typical of this part of Suffolk) was significantly repaired in 2010 and the remainder of the church is in good condition with just a few areas of damp that require attention. St. Mary's is now blessed with adequate heating systems.



We have an enthusiastic core of worshippers, and the electoral roll is approximately 20. Our relationship with the village hall committee and other groups in the village is extremely healthy and we have a bi-weekly lunchtime get together in the village hall, attracting many from across the 10 villages, sharing a meal and a simple service.

At services we have a regular attendance of about 6-10, with significant numbers at Harvest, Christmas, Christingle and Eastertide. We have a close relationship with our sister churches and often have joint services with Hemingstone. A recent purchase of a digital organ has given us the ability to continue to sing hymns at services whether an organist is available or not!



While raising funds we organise several events, including an Open Day with trips up the tower, barbeque and teddies jumping. Our village hall Christmas breakfast fundraiser is well attended, and this coupled with regular giving enables us to meet our diocesan quota.

St Mary's considers its strength to be the warm welcome and inclusive attitude. The church is left unlocked and visitors are frequent, helped by the proximity of Gosbeck wood, an SSI. The Gardemau Trust recently acquired a small piece of land adjoining which enables parking off the main Ipswich Road. We consider our challenge to be drawing people into the church, and we actively encourage lay and young people to participate in our services. We like to think that we should be accessible to all, whatever their station or religious leaning, high, low or evangelical.

St Gregory's, Hemingstone

Hemingstone is composed of a hamlet on Church Lane/Henley Road and along Rectory Road and Lower Road with a scattering of more isolated homes in the parish's 2 ¼ square miles. The 2021 census counted 245 souls, a fifth of whom gather in the Church at Christmas. Less than a fifth are under 20 and all live in around 80 privately owned homes. The Church boasts a well-maintained hall, one of the smallest WIs in Suffolk, a cavemen group, a ladies' group, a book club, several WhatsApp groups and a re-opened pub.

St. Gregory's church has a small core congregation which swells on feast days, rites of passage and other occasions. Around that core are a large number of people who do the cleaning, maintain fresh flowers, keep the grass at bay and promote nature in the churchyard, help organise the widely popular fund-raising flower and harvest festivals, provide a historic view, and those who keep the clock, ring the (newly restored) bells, play our splendid organ and a host of other instruments and of course sing - thus exploiting St. Gregory's magnificent acoustics. A great many people are involved with and committed to St. Gregory's.

The church stands on a former Saxon site overlooking rolling countryside and celebrated its 700th birthday in 2016. It still has no water supply. The small but "living" churchyard focuses local minds; loved ones' graves are tended, while others enjoy walking amongst the old tombs and a group is keen to develop its natural potential.





Harvest Festival

With the benefit of successful fundraising, important works to the tower costing £90,000 were undertaken by 2020. In the 2022 quinquennial report the cost of repairs (largely to ancient stone window frames) to the Grade 1 listed building was estimated to be in the order of a further £90,000 but none are urgent and so the work can be phased. The PCC tries to put money aside for repairs after paying the bills including its full parish share.

The number of services decreased by 1/5th between 2019 and 2023 but the average congregation rose by 1/6th and the average collection also increased. A drop in the number of children attending reflects the ageing population and we hope to counter this with more children-oriented services. Our small core congregation promotes and partakes in a variety of services that can appeal to the wider community while also including traditional elements such as the old language of some prayers and hymns. Above all we find comfort in the moral compass of Christianity and the example and teaching of Jesus and seek to extend this to others.

Our church is ecumenical in outlook. We are resolved to step up our efforts to involve people who do not consider themselves religious and to emphasise that the church is as much theirs as it is the congregation's. St. Gregory's welcomes all and will be around for whenever the community needs it. The church is open at all times for anyone to find peace or solace, to enjoy its architectural features or to take or swap a good book at the village library which is situated at the back of the church.

St Mary and St Lambert, Stonham Aspal and Mickfield

Our total population is about 800, including 160 under 16s. As a typical country parish, houses range from old cottages to modern properties. Most are privately owned with some social housing. There is a mixed age group from young families to retired people. Local employment is confined to a few small concerns such as joinery works, kitchen manufacture, some small business units and Stonham Barns Park. This has about 150 holiday lodges which are occupied for eleven months of the year. There are shops, a post office, catering and leisure facilities. New domestic housing in the village has added 65 homes over the last five years. Although the area is predominantly agricultural, this only employs a few residents. Unemployment is low and most travel to work in nearby villages, towns or London.

Parish facilities consist of a well-appointed village hall with well equipped kitchen and bar. It hosts W.I., dances, cinema, men's breakfast and keep-fit classes. The bar is open for pub night, bingo, quiz and other occasional events. The Ten Bells pub is closed but may be open at weekends by the time this is read. The village has a football club and tennis and basketball courts as well as a recreation ground with play equipment. A playing field and community centre is situated in Mickfield. Stonham Aspal has a community council and both villages have active parish councils.



Stonham Aspal CEVAP school has about 190 pupils drawn from surrounding villages, mainly in the benefice. It has a good OFSTED report and the Rector is an ex-officio Governor and liaises with the school. End of term services and harvest festivals are held in the church, in addition to children occasionally visiting for lessons. The Rector is also an ex-officio Trustee of the Metcalf charities which provide funds for educational and other purposes.

With a magnificent clerestory and wooden topped tower accommodating ten bells, our 13th Century Grade 1 listed church stands in the centre of the village and is open daily. The building is kept in a good state of repair. The heating has been upgraded, clerestories restored, bell frame repaired to allow regular ringing and the west end re-ordered to provide a welcoming entrance to the church, kitchen facilities and a more open area for community use. A new equal access toilet with baby changing facilities has been installed in the north porch.

After closure in the 1970s St Andrew's Church Mickfield has been converted into a domestic dwelling. The chancel and sanctuary are occasionally used for services with a visiting priest and the graveyard extension is still in use for burials.

With an electoral roll of 23 we have a small but regular congregation of 10-15, which increases during festivals, Mothering Sunday, baptisms etc. The style of churchmanship is central, with a range of services to suit most appetites. We have a visiting organist for special occasions and two other musicians who play piano accordion, violin, guitar and organ for regular services, with CDs being used occasionally. We produce our own service sheets for Worship for All services. A small team organises social and fund-raising events. A free coffee morning once a week allows socialising for anyone who wishes to come. Each month we have Worship for All, Holy Communion and occasional BCP Evensong services. On average we would expect two baptisms, one wedding and three funerals per year.

Our challenges are to increase regular worshippers, spread the workload over a larger congregation, aspire to the success of Mickfield Evangelical Church and Debenham Forge Community Church, increase support from Mickfield village and continue raising sufficient funds to pay the Parish Share in full.



School children writing prayers during PraySpace, led by Bury Christian Youth

For more information see the village websites:

www.stonhamaspal.co.uk and www.mickfieldvillage.co.uk

Standard pattern of services across the Benefice, 2023

				Typical Attendance
1st Sunday	Creeting St Peter	09.30 am	Morning Worship	8
	Crowfield	09.30 am	Morning Worship	7
	Coddenham	11.00 am	Holy Communion	19
	Gosbeck	11.00 am	Morning Worship	9
	Hemingstone	4.00/6.30 pm	Evening Prayer	10
2nd Sunday	Hemingstone	09.30 am	Holy Communion	9
	Stonham Aspal	09.30 am	Worship for All	17
	Creeting St Mary	11.00 am	Morning Prayer BCP	11
	Earl Stonham	11.00 am	Holy Communion	12
	Gosbeck	4.00/6.30 pm	Evening Prayer	11
	Stonham Aspal	4.00/6.30 pm	Evening Prayer	11
3rd Sunday	Coddenham	09.30 am	Morning Worship	12
	Crowfield	09.30 am	Morning Worship	8
	Creeting St Peter	11.00 am	Holy Communion BCP	14
	Gosbeck	11.00 am	Holy Communion	7
4th Sunday	Hemingstone	09.30 am	Morning Worship	11
	Stonham Aspal	09.30 am	Holy Communion	6
	Creeting St Mary	11.00 am	Holy Communion	11
	Earl Stonham	11.00 am	Morning Worship	11
	Coddenham	4.00/6.30 pm	Evening Prayer	9
5th Sunday	In turn, but usually Creeting St Mary on the Sunday after Christmas, Coddenham/Stonham Aspal at Candlemas, Stonham Parva in July			
Festivals	Across the benefice: Easter - 213, Harvest - 259, Remembrance - 186, Christmas (excluding school services) - 873			

The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

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 diocesan bishop is the Right Reverend Martin Seeley. Bishop Martin works to help us shape our vision and strategy, and amongst a plethora of other tasks offers regular teaching mornings to nurture the faith of people in our congregations – and a regular Vlog which can be found on Facebook. 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.

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

The logo for 'Growing in God' features the text 'Growing in God' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. Above the letter 'o' in 'Growing', there is a small green sprout with two leaves and a thin stem, symbolizing growth.

APPENDIX 2 continued

Parishes are encouraged to use a simple Mission Action Planning 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.

As part of this vision, we have recently received Strategic Development Funding for two major projects: Inspiring Ipswich, overseen by the Archdeacon of Ipswich which aims to grow the church in Ipswich through church planting and reaching out to those who live in the town, and 'Growing God in the Countryside', overseen by the Archdeacon for Rural Mission. This focusses on nurturing and discipling new Christians through small Lightwave groups and hubs such as the one being established at Bungay.

(The Growing in God in the Countryside project plan is available among the documents at www.light-wave.org/vacancies)

We have also been part of a pilot scheme exploring how we can use our church buildings more creatively both for those who worship regularly and for the benefit of our communities and many churches have benefitted from this.

We are broadening our vision through a growing partnership with the Diocese of Kagera in Tanzania, with fruitful visits and links being established.

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 of people exercising recently introduced licensed 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'.

APPENDIX 3



The diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich strongly encourages all benefices to include small missional groups and new worshipping communities within a rich mixed ecology.

As well as being supported in this through the Mission and Ministry Department, you may find it useful to connect with the Lightwave Community:

The Lightwave community is a dispersed Christian community, made up of small ecclesial disciple-making groups with shared practices and a focus on contextual innovative mission. It intentionally works in complementarity and synergy with parish churches. Lightwave groups reach out in all sorts of ways from walking groups to youth bands to cooking initiatives. The creative possibilities are limited only by listening to God in each context. Our vision is simply for a wave of God's light and love in Suffolk.

Lightwave is a "Bishop's Mission Order" (BMO). This is an ecclesial status directly under the diocesan bishop (like a PCC, but based on its mission purpose rather than a specific parochial area – so in some respects like a monastic order.) It is led by an ordained minister, has a Bishop's Visitor on its governing body and several members are direct Bishop's appointees. Its governing document as a charitable incorporated organisation is the BMO, and its governing body is called the Lightwave Community Council.

All this means that if you have a dream for mission or a missional experiment in your context which does not fit easily under the current benefice accountability structures, the Lightwave BMO may well be able to help to provide the legal structure and practical support you need.

In addition, Lightwave's character as a county-wide community, made up of groups with a focus on contextual innovative mission, means that, if you want to engage in pioneering mission, it is a great place to share prayer, learning and encouragement with others. You and your small missional groups are welcome to join in with Lightwave's networking activities even if the groups are not formally or legally part of the Lightwave BMO.

Find out more at www.lightwave.community

Get in touch by emailing lightwave.community@cofesuffolk