

Post of Team Vicar Sole Bay Team



SOLE ⊕ BAY
CHURCHES

BLYTHBURGH • REYDON • SOUTH COVE
SOTHERTON • SOUTHWOLD • UGGESHALL
WALBERSWICK • WANGFORD CUM HENHAM

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord,
call to our churches a true Shepherd,
a man or woman of God,
a minister of Christ,
and make us, with him or her,
a church joyful in worship and united in witness, working, caring, praising, loving,
to the glory of your Name,
through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

WELCOME FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF SUFFOLK

I am delighted that you are interested in finding out more about this exciting post in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. The role of Team Vicar in the Sole Bay Team is a wonderful post, I can say this with confidence having served in the team myself for six and a half years (2009-2016). The parishes are set in a beautiful part of Suffolk and serve both coastal and rural communities.

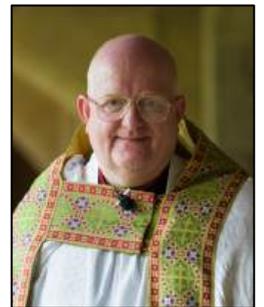
We are looking for an enthusiastic priest with a pastoral heart and passion for mission, particularly with children, young people, and young adults. Someone who can work collaboratively with ordained and lay colleagues across the communities to engage creatively and missionally, sustaining existing church life and developing new ways of being church.

As a diocese we offer our clergy a range of support including a new incumbents' group, mentoring, the Suffolk Ministry Development Programme and a diocesan team focused on parishes and our shared Growing in God vision.

I hope you will enjoy reading what follows, and that you will prayerfully seek to discern whether God is calling you to Sole Bay. If you would value an informal conversation about the post, please don't hesitate to contact me by emailing: archdeacon.rich@cofesuffolk.org

Please be assured of my prayers for all those reading this Profile.

Venerable Rich Henderson
Archdeacon of Suffolk



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

WELCOME FROM THE TEAM RECTOR

Thank you for your interest in this exciting post. I can highly recommend it to you! I came to lead the Sole Bay Churches in November 2023, and I have very quickly been welcomed into this stunning and culturally rich part of East Suffolk.

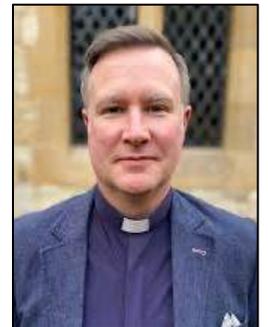
As you will see from many of the pictures in this profile, the buildings in which we worship are glorious, but the true beauty of the Church is the people of God, who desire to encounter the Lord Jesus Christ through the full breadth of styles within the Church of England. In the Sole Bay Team, you will find Toddler Groups, Café Church, Animal Blessing Services, Beach Missions, Choral Evensong and everything in between!

Whilst we are happily rooted in the heritage of our Anglican worship, we are also alert to the new opportunities which the Holy Spirit is opening to us. We want to grow younger and more diverse in line with our Diocese strategy for growth and whilst we cherish traditional service styles, we are by no means bound by them.

We are committed to inclusivity across sexuality, gender, disability, ethnicity and age, and we seek to take our responsibilities towards the safeguarding of all with the highest priority.

We have a friendly, able and dedicated team of lay and ordained leaders who are keen to work with a new colleague who we hope will bring enthusiasm, imagination and dynamism to our team. We hope you will find the following profile attractive: this is a great place to live and work.

Reverend Russ Gant
Team Rector



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THE ROLE OF TEAM VICAR

Working closely with the Team Rector, the Team Vicar will share pastoral responsibilities for the cure of souls across the eight parishes of the Team but will have particular oversight of the congregations and communities of St Margaret's Reydon, St Lawrence's South Cove and St Peter and St Paul's Wangford.

In addition to these existing responsibilities, it is envisaged that the next Team Vicar will:

- Line manage the new post of Youth Minister (not yet appointed, but expected to work across the Benefice).
- Be involved in helping to establish a new worshipping community – probably aimed at younger adults.
- Embrace technology to help share acts of worship online.
- Take a share of baptisms, weddings and funerals across the team.
- Assist the Team Rector in reviewing the worshipping pattern of the team churches.
- Be a visible presence in local schools (particularly Reydon Primary and St Felix schools).
- Help to inspire, support, nurture and enable other leaders, both ordained and lay.
- Oversee the continued discipleship and pastoral care of our older faithful congregants.



WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We know that often the tendency is to set impossibly high requirements of those in ordained ministry. We are realistic. In our various discernments and prayers, certain words and phrases have been recurring:

We hope God will bring us someone who is:

- **Full of faith** – knowing that it is God, by his Holy Spirit, who ultimately brings transformation.
- A **collaborative** ‘team player’ – able to connect with and build meaningful relationships with all people whether from faith or non-faith backgrounds.
- Someone with a **track record of working with young people** in secular or church contexts.
- A **visionary**, able to think beyond the ‘normal way of doing things’ and bring others on a journey of discovery.
- A person whose life is **rooted in prayer**.
- Someone who is **theologically rich** and an inspirational preacher and teacher.

“Is this you? If so, we’d love to hear from you.”



WHAT CAN WE OFFER?

As you discern whether God is calling you to serve in the Sole Bay Churches, we hope the following information will encourage you. In no particular order:

- There is a real willingness amongst our people to see God 'do a new thing' and to go where His Spirit may lead us.
- We have supportive and faith-filled lay and ordained colleagues (see page 7).
- We have excellent administrative support.
- This is a role in which you can play to your strengths.
- We are keen to grow younger, to grow in faith and to grow in service to the wider community.
- As a team we know the vital importance of clergy wellbeing. We value the need for rest and refreshment.
- This part of North-East Suffolk is a truly stunning place in which to live and work.
- We have glorious church buildings in which to minister and worship.
- We offer a modern, comfortable, spacious, purpose-built vicarage (see next page).



THE VICARAGE

The vicarage is a modern, purpose built, home with spacious gardens to front and rear, ample parking and easy access to the local shops, schools and pubs. The house comprises:

- Large study with separate access and toilet
- Kitchen/diner with views over the rear garden
- Utility room
- Lounge with open fireplace
- Dining room
- Four bedrooms, one with en-suite
- Large built-in wardrobes
- Single car garage.

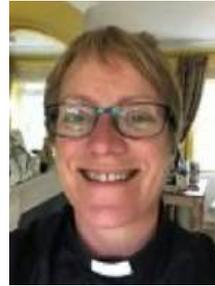


MINISTRY TEAM

We are extremely blessed to have a hardworking and dedicated team of ordained and lay leaders here in the Sole Bay Churches. Our clergy team consists of one Self-supporting Minister (SSM) and six retired ministers who hold the Bishop's Permission to Officiate. We also have two Lay Readers who lead and preach, a Chair who is 'Pastor to the pastors' and an excellent Team Administrator and Team Treasurer.



Revd Russ Gant
Team Rector



Revd Judy Miller
Associate Priest (SSM)



Revd Philip Tarris
Assistant Priest (PTO)



Revd Margaret King
Assistant Priest (PTO)



Revd Malcolm Doney
Assistant Priest (PTO)



Revd Alan Crawley
Assistant Priest (PTO)



Revd Lesley Crawley
Assistant Priest (PTO)



Revd Canon Harry Edwards
Assistant Priest (PTO)



Robert Andrewes
Licensed Lay Reader



Hugh Williamson
Licensed Lay Preacher



Marina Turvill-Smith
Team Lay Chair



Amanda Savory
Team Administrator



Jenny Allen
Team Treasurer

LOCATION

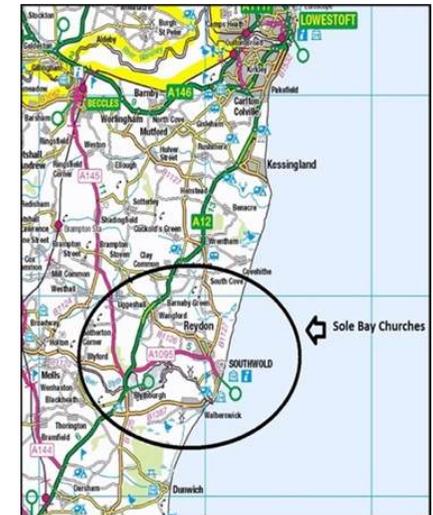
The parishes in the Team, with a combined population of 6,120 (2021 Census), cover an area of 16 square miles, including the Suffolk coastal town of Southwold, 12 miles south of Lowestoft. The A12 provides good road links to the south. Norwich is very accessible. Rail links (from Darsham) provide a reliable service every hour to Ipswich with connections to London Liverpool Street (journey time of circa two hours). Many people from the area work some of the week in London.

Some of the parishes swell in the summer with holidaymakers (and a significant proportion of properties especially in Reydon, Southwold, Walberswick and Wangford are holiday homes). This is more significant than might at first appear because some regular holidaymakers are part of church life while they are here and have weddings and baptisms in churches within the Team.

Southwold has an excellent summer theatre and a well supported small private cinema. RSPB Minsmere is a few miles away and the area is popular for ornithologists and walkers. The internationally renowned Snape Maltings concert hall is a few miles south and Aldeburgh Festival concerts are held regularly in Blythburgh and Southwold churches. There is also lots for children to do.

Bury St Edmunds, where the Cathedral is located, is 75 minutes away by car. This is an agricultural area with a number of arable and livestock farms. The large Henham Estate hosts the Latitude music festival in July and the Steam and Country Show each September – both of these have significant church involvement. Adnams plc has its headquarters and brewery in Southwold and the distribution centre for the brewery is in Reydon.

Southwold and Reydon each has a primary school. St Felix independent school is in Reydon and the High Schools where the majority of our young people attend are outside the Benefice. The Sole Bay Health Centre opened in Reydon in 2015. The nearest hospital is the James Paget University NHS Trust Hospital in Gorleston.



The Team Rector was appointed in 2023 and is ably assisted by a group of immensely committed clergy and lay colleagues. He has a desire to grow lay leadership in the Team, moving away from a reliance on those who are ordained and especially to encourage younger leaders. The Rector is encouraging all our congregations to reflect on and develop the following five foundational Christian practices:

1. Being people whose lives are rooted in **PRAYER**.
2. Developing communities that are truly **WELCOMING** and inclusive to all.
3. Committed to the one we **WORSHIP** - rather than the way we worship.
4. Offering ourselves in dedicated **SERVICE** to all.
5. Being sacrificial in our **GENEROUS** giving.



He is also keen that all the parishes think ‘outside the box’ when it comes to the future of mission and ministry, acknowledging that simply seeking to keep the show on the road is not an option.

“If we only do what we have always done, we will only get what we have always got, but where the Spirit is at work, transformation will follow.” Revd Russ Gant – Team Rector

The Sole Bay Team is blessed with some truly stunning buildings and some incredibly gifted and faithful individuals. Whilst there are conservative (small ‘c’) elements in some quarters, elsewhere there is considerable openness to new forms of ministry. There is a variety of churchmanship, and the liturgy of Common Worship is used in most churches in the Team although there is a strong preference by some for the Book of Common Prayer. There is a genuine desire by the laity to deepen their faith and to equipped develop the ministry of the local church.



Our churches strongly support the Eco-Church movement with most parishes now holding the Bronze Eco-Church award and two having achieved Silver status.

The church plays a major role in civic and community life. Festivals such as Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, Christmas and Easter still attract large congregations, and the church is invited to be part of community celebrations and events.

There is considerable collaboration within the Team, but there is further work to be done to build a deeper sense of oneness. At present parishes work together on:

- Team services on fifth Sundays and on certain key festivals
- Ecumenical Lent groups and Lent lunches
- Good Friday 'walk of witness' and open-air service
- Eco-Church developments
- Team confirmations and wedding preparation
- Bible study groups
- Ecumenical discipleship courses
- Open the Book schools' team
- Charitable fundraising
- Mother's Union
- Recent pilgrimages to Iona, the Holy Land and Santiago de Compostela.



The majority of churches and all clergy have recently affirmed their desire to be fully inclusive when it comes to the use of prayers of blessing for same sex couples who have been married.

We fully accept and support the ministry of all people as equals.

Holy Trinity, Blythburgh

Patron – Sir Charles Blois

Population – 335

Electoral Roll - 47

Blythburgh is a lively, neighbourly community. Despite its small size, and the fact that the village is bisected by the A12, there is a strong sense of local identity. The village has a popular Horticultural Society (more social than horticultural), a well-attended monthly film night and a weekly line-dancing group.

The bi-monthly *Blythburgh Focus* magazine, along with Blythburgh Matters (an email communication service), and a village Facebook page keep people informed on what's taking place. Every year the village gathers in the grounds of a private home to celebrate Blythburgh Day. The garden of this home contains the remains of a 12th-century Augustinian priory, and the church launches the day with an open air service in the ruins.

There is a healthy interaction between the church and the wider parish community. Members of the congregation are active in – and often central to – many areas of village life. We host a monthly café and mini-market which acts as a vibrant social hub for the village. There is a strong sense of ownership of the church by Blythburgh residents, and a group of villagers (many of whom aren't churchgoers) have formed a cleaning team to look after the place.

The church building, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, is known far and wide as the 'Cathedral of the Marshes,' and is a kind of national treasure, acknowledged as one of the finest 15th-century parish churches in the country. It is a Grade 1 listed building. The interior has a remarkable translucent quality derived from its clear light, uncluttered spaciousness, and the awe-inspiring, painted angel roof. We estimate that around 15,000 people visit the church each year. The church has just embarked on an ambitious project to provide a toilet, kitchen and bell ringing room.

Holy Trinity has a small, but loyal and energetic congregation who come from a variety of church backgrounds. They enjoy each other's company. The mixed diet of services – Common Worship and BCP eucharists and lay-led morning prayer, together with a weekly Zoom compline – is designed to accommodate the variety of churchmanship. Monthly choral evensong is led by the cathedral-standard Blythburgh Singers and attracts a congregation from across the area.



St Margaret's, Reydon

Patron - Robert Rous and Sir Charles Blois (*alternate*)

Population – 2,532

Electoral Roll - 117

Reydon is a large, active village whose boundary blurs with the coastal town of Southwold, so there is a fair amount of interchange between the two communities. There is mixed housing comprising private, council housing and affordable housing. Two significant new housing developments are underway, totaling almost 300 new homes. This presents the challenge and exciting opportunity of how the local church serves new as well as existing residents. Reydon also has a large number of second homes, or homes which are occupied as holiday homes. There are two well stocked village shops and a hotel.

Other accommodation for the elderly and less able is available at Pitches View (sheltered accommodation) and Oaklands (private sheltered accommodation and residential care). There are also two schools in the parish: Reydon Primary School (200 students) and the independent St Felix School (350 students).

St Margaret's is a very active church offering a warm welcome and a strong sense of family. There are a variety of Sunday services including BCP and Common Worship Communion services and a monthly Café Church. Services are taken at the local Care Homes. The church building is open daily and regular activities include a monthly coffee and conversation group, a knitting group, a lunch club, team ladies fellowship, Mothers' Union and a walk and talk group in partnership with the local health centre.

A small team from the congregation has taken 'Open the Book' into Reydon Primary School, which has strengthened the links between the church and school, with the result that the school now visits the church for Harvest and Christmas services and other activities.

The church building is in good repair. An amplification system with an induction loop has been installed along with screen and livestreaming technology.

There is a need to raise up new leaders and reengage younger families, but the church is well equipped to welcome new seekers and disciples.



St Andrew's, Sotherton

Patron – Robert Rous

Population – 86

Electoral Roll - 18

Sotherton is a dispersed community with the church building situated in a remote location just off the A145 nestled among fields. The church has records dating back to 1556 although it was modernised in Victorian times. Two panels from the long-lost medieval screen survive as panels to the vestry door, and a splendid carved figure of a crusader knight rests peacefully in the alcove.

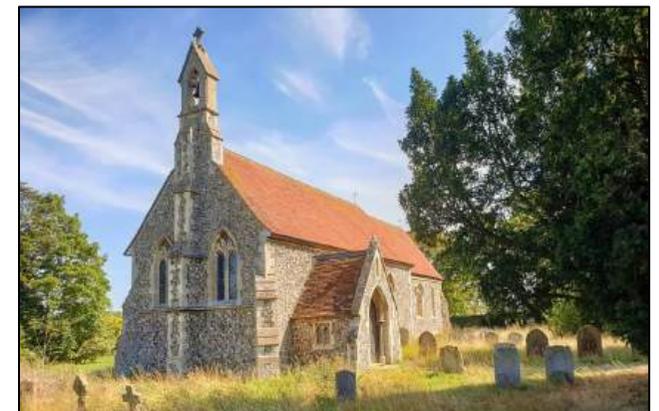
There is no electricity or running water at the church, so services are by candlelight in the winter months, lending a beautiful atmosphere to the worship and singing is accompanied by a hand-pumped organ.

St Andrew's makes a beautiful intimate venue for weddings and baptisms.

The small, but faithful rural congregation worship using the liturgy of Common Worship once a month. In addition festival services at Christmas, Easter and Harvest are well supported. There are non-sacramental services on occasion.

The hardworking and committed PCC and congregation are determined to keep things moving forward. They are open to change and – with guidance and support – desire to expand their congregation.

The annual Henham Steam and Country Show, which takes place in September, is fundamental to the financial viability of the church, as well as playing a positive role in community participation. The PCC also holds fund-raising and social events like quiz nights and cake sales on a regular basis.



St Lawrence's, South Cove

Patron – Susan, Lady Gooch

Population – 22

Electoral Roll - 26

South Cove is the smallest and most northerly parish in the Sole Bay Team. There are only 11 homes in the parish with a population of around 20.

St. Lawrence's motto is, 'A small church with a big heart'. There are 22 on the electoral roll, but most of them come from neighbouring parishes. Most attend church services very regularly.

Once a month, there is a service, usually Evensong, with sung canticles, psalms and hymns, all accompanied by the organist (the churchwarden) on the chamber organ. Communion services are held twice a year. Harvest Thanksgiving and the Christmas Carol Service both attract large congregations. We also enjoy and celebrate an outdoor 'Songs of Praise' to mark our Patronal Festival in August, followed by tea and cake.

The main highlight of the year is our annual Flower Festival and Meadow Sale at the end of July. Visitors come from far and wide to enjoy the superb floral displays arranged by 14 expert flower arrangers, to browse the book stall marquee and to chat with friends over some light, home-made refreshments on sale.

St Lawrence Church is a simple thatched church. The nave has been dated to the late Saxon period c.1000AD. The chancel was added in 1240AD and the tower in the 14th century. The north door is dated to the 15th century and, like the later south door, is set within exterior Norman arches. In 2022 the porch was restored and its roof re-lated.

A particular feature of interest is that the rood loft stair remains and its original door bears an exquisite painting of the figure of St. Michael, with his sword and dragon, completed around 1470.

St. Lawrence Church is open every day of the year and the many visitors comment on the beauty, friendliness and peace they experience on their visits.



St Edmund's, Southwold

Patron – Simeon's Trust

Population – 949

Electoral Roll - 115

Southwold is a busy seaside town and tourist resort which attracts thousands of visitors all year round. It has a reputation for providing classic 'bucket and spade' holidays for families, and an offering of rich culture, high-quality food and glorious scenery. There is a small working population and many retired incomers. The majority of the properties belong to second homeowners, including properties owned specifically for holiday lets.

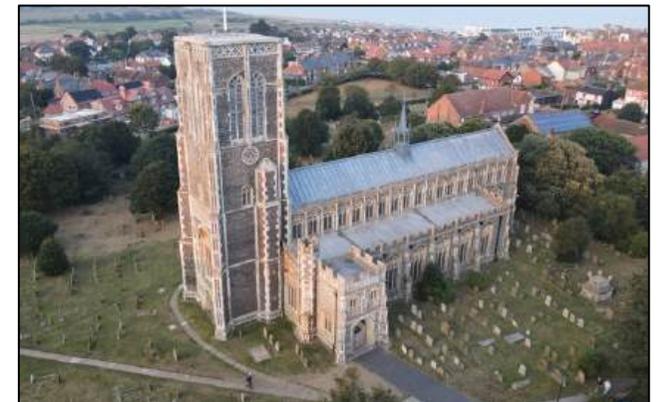
Southwold has a Primary School, although many of the pupils live outside the parish. Whilst this is not a Church school, there are strong links with St Edmunds.

There is one private care home for elderly people, St. Barnabas, and the Council-owned Crick Court which provides sheltered accommodation.

Non-churchgoers in the town very much regard St. Edmunds as 'their church', illustrated by the number of volunteers who come to clean and polish, arrange flowers, assist at church events and steward in the church to welcome visitors. The team of volunteer stewards enable the church to be kept open to the approximately 30,000 visitors per year.

St Edmund's has diverse but welcoming congregations supporting a range of worshipping styles including BCP Holy Communion, a parish Communion using Common Worship, an informal morning worship service with children's groups and Choral Evensong. The church was recently reordered to provide more flexible space.

The church is used for community worship, such as the civic service and the annual Remembrance Sunday service. There is also an ecumenical Christians Together in Southwold and Reydon group that organises a Good Friday service followed by a Walk of Witness, and Lent Lunches and study groups.



St Mary's, Uggeshall

Patron – Robert Rous

Population – 147

Electoral Roll - 16

There is a genuine sense of community throughout Uggeshall. It has a small number of second homes and holiday cottages, most of the houses are owner-occupied – full time residents are largely retired. There are two working arable farms and one small livestock concern. There is a busy garage for sales, repairs and MOT tests and a village hall. There is no public house or school, the nearest primary school is in Brampton. Uggeshall has a broad and rough expanse of water meadows, neighbouring the Henham Estate.

The local community feels a strong connection with the church and is actively involved in an annual church clean and churchyard clearance. The church sponsored-Uggeshall Teas, held over one weekend each summer, are a big draw for surrounding communities. The money raised goes into a fund primarily for the church thatch, but also towards maintenance and improvement of The Old School Hall. The Hall is the regular venue for a monthly coffee morning, cinema club and a gardening club. The church owns a small cottage which is let out and provides valuable income for the church.

The regular congregation of St Mary's is small, but loyal, active and well-connected to the folk of this scattered, rural locality.

Current services are from the Book of Common Prayer (Evensong and a monthly service of Holy Communion). Although the regular attendance is very small, for special services the church is well supported by the wider community; the Christmas Eve Carol Service sees the church filled to capacity.

St Mary's is an ancient and interesting church of flint construction with a thatched roof. The building is maintained to a high standard, though it has no running water. There is a well-serviced organ and working bell, both regularly used. The churchyard is open. Income from the annual Henham Steam Rally helps sustain the building and ministry.



St Andrew's, Walberswick

Patron – Sir Charles Blois

Population – 346

Electoral Roll - 47

Walberswick is a coastal village in an area of outstanding natural beauty just south of the River Blyth, and in a village with a wealth of talent, creativity and cultural resources. The village comprises 350 houses accommodating a combination of full-time residents, second homeowners and commercially let properties. The village has two well-used public houses, The Bell and The Anchor, which also have accommodation. There is a Deli, and a good size village shop. More tourist-focused shops and cafes are on the Village Green.

St Andrew's is very much at the heart of the community. The congregation is warm and welcoming to all. The church provides a diversity of services. Common Worship Holy Communion is held on two Sundays a month, shared with Holy Trinity, Blythburgh. Once a month there is a more informal All Age Service, where coffee, hot chocolate and pastries are served. There is also a monthly BCP Choral Evensong. Once a week, there is a midweek service of BCP Holy Communion.

The Team Rector who has responsibility for Walberswick is also an ex officio trustee of the Walberswick Common Lands Charity which is responsible for custody of over 162 acres of land in and around Walberswick.

A recently initiated monthly Community Café held in the Village Hall is proving very popular and a place of relationship building.

Many who do not attend services will visit St Andrew's for quiet contemplation, and appreciate its presence for family weddings, baptisms, and funerals. An extended congregation helps with cleaning and flower arranging and willingly undertakes practical tasks. The church also has a supportive 'Friends' group who assist with fundraising.

St Andrew's is a Grade I listed building, the current church (1696) is sited in the corner of the ruined mediaeval church. Extensive conservation and renovation work to the vast ruins were completed in 2017.



St Peter and St Paul's, Wangford-cum-Henham

Patron – Robert Rous

Population – 563

Electoral Roll - 65

The village of Wangford-cum-Henham, just off the A12, comprises a mixture of rented, private and holiday homes with many villagers historically connected to the adjoining Henham Estate. The village is well served by an excellent shop, veterinary practice, dog grooming parlour, doctor's surgery, farm shop and nursery, garage with petrol, two pubs and good bus services. There is an excellent and well used Community Centre building with full catering facilities. A number of village groups operate from the Centre – book club, painting and drawing group, keep fit classes, sports club, parent and toddler group a knitting group and the fledgling youth group.

The congregation reflects the make-up of this small village. The congregation is predominantly elderly but with some younger members. The weekly Common Worship Communion service has grown in recent years and now averages 22-25. A family service once a month called Family@Church enables a more informal style of worship.

We have an enthusiastic and capable PCC who are fully committed to maintain the fabric of the church but also a commitment to its mission. The Church benefits from the annual Henham Steam Rally. We hold a popular Carol Service for the village the Sunday before Christmas and there is carol singing around the village and Beer and Carols in the churchyard before Christmas. We have many professional and amateur musicians and performers in the village and we regularly arrange concerts in the Church. Church coffee mornings are held once a month and a Men's Breakfast group which meets monthly at The Angel Inn.

St Peter and St Paul is an impressive Grade 1 listed building, which stands on the former site of a Cluniac Monastery. Mediaeval parts of the church remain, but the building underwent complete renovation in the 19th century. In 2018, a servery and toilets were sympathetically added at the West End of the Church which provides catering facilities for many church and village events.



CURRENT PATTERN OF WORSHIP ACROSS THE TEAM

The following table illustrates the current pattern of worship across the team. This is an ambitious schedule of services and is reliant on the willingness of retired clergy with PTO to assist the Team Rector and Team Vicar. There is currently little space for fresh expressions of worship.

Monthly Sunday Worship Schedule									
	Week 1		Week 2		Week 3		Week 4		Week 5
8:00	Southwold	HC (BCP)	Reydon	HC (BCP)	Southwold	HC (BCP)	Reydon	HC (BCP)	
9:30	Reydon	HC (CW)	Reydon	HC (CW)	Reydon	HC (CW)	Reydon	CC	
	Southwold	MW	Southwold	MW +HC	Southwold	MW	Southwold	MW	
					Blythburgh	MP	Blythburgh	HC (BCP)	
					Sotherton	HC (CW)			
11:15	Southwold	HC (CW)	Blythburgh	HC (CW)	Southwold	HC (CW)	Walberswick	FS	United Team Service
	Walberswick	HC (CW)	Wangford	HC (CW)	Walberswick	HC (CW)	Wangford	FS	
	Wangford	HC (CW)			Wangford	HC (CW)			
15:00					South Cove	CE			
18:00	Blythburgh	CE	Southwold	CE	Uggeshall	CE	Southwold	CE	
	Uggeshall	CE	Walberswick	CE			Uggeshall	HC (BCP)	
			Uggeshall	CE					

Key

HC (BCP)	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
HC (CW)	Holy Communion (Common Worship)
MW	Morning Worship with children's groups
CE	Choral Evensong
CC	Café Church
MP	Morning Prayer
FS	Family Service

In addition to these Sunday services, the following weekday services currently take place:

18:30	Tuesday	Reydon	Holy Communion (CW)
10:00	Wednesday	Walberswick	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:00	Thursday	Southwold	Holy Communion (BCP)
20:30	Thursday	Blythburgh	Compline (via Zoom)
16:00	Friday	Southwold	Evening Prayer





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 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 Martin Seeley retired as diocesan Bishop at the end of February 2025; the leadership of the diocese is now with The Right Revd Graeme Knowles. Bishop Graeme is acting diocesan Bishop until a new appointment is made. 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

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 received Strategic Development Funding for two major projects: Inspiring Ipswich, overseen by the Acting 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 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'.

Introduction

The Waveney and Blyth Deanery sits in the northeast corner of Suffolk and comprises 53 parishes. There are four principal areas of population, Beccles, Halesworth, Bungay and Southwold with Reydon. Lowestoft is the



nearest large town, but it is in the Diocese of Norwich. Norwich itself is a popular city for shopping, culture and football. The Deanery is predominately rural. Farming is very important and so is tourism with the coastline between Lowestoft and Felixstowe being an area of outstanding natural beauty. Employment opportunities are provided by light industrial and commercial areas on the outskirts of Beccles, Halesworth and Reydon.

The many parish churches in our Deanery are, like most of East Anglia, listed medieval buildings with much historic interest. The charm of the Deanery is the physical beauty of the countryside and coast. The

geographic location can contribute to a sense of being a long way from everywhere, which some might consider a good thing!

The Deanery Churches

Many of the rural parishes are characterised by the faithful few sustaining witness and worship in small villages. We gather in our iconic mediaeval churches that make up the offer that attracts business, holiday makers and retirees to this corner of the county. We are still committed to a Christian presence in every community and there are vibrant shoots of change in many of our churches. There is a high level of second home ownership in some parts of the Deanery and rural de-population because of falling agricultural and other accessible lucrative employment. Whilst deep rurality is an attraction for some, for others it is a cause of isolation and deprivation. Across our parishes the church is a valued and supported part of the geographical and social landscape.

We are engaging with the discussions about recruiting and funding stipendiary parochial clergy that are happening at all levels within the Church of England. There is a growing openness to change, and an awareness that we must all embrace a new future together if the church is to survive, flourish and grow. In many parishes SSM's, Readers, and particularly Lay Elders, share the pastoral work of the church in the community. We are also blessed by the help of a number of active retired clergy.

Deanery Meetings

Chapter meets on alternate months. Stipendiary clergy are expected to attend and take a full part in Chapter meetings. There are several wider Chapter events during the year that are open to all forms of ministries. Deanery Synod meets three times a year. We have a full complement of representatives to the Diocesan Synod. Deanery Synod members are encouraged and expected to give a report of Synod business to their PCCs.

Summary

The Deanery seeks to be a supportive structure that enables parishes and individuals to flourish where they are. In our context the sharing of experience, gifts and resources is encouraged.



Revd Dominic Doble - Rural Dean
E: dominic.doble@phonecoop.coop
T: 07743 554955

SOLE ⊕ BAY CHURCHES

BLYTHBURGH • REYDON • SOUTH COVE
SOTHERTON • SOUTHWOLD • UGGESHALL
WALBERSWICK • WANGFORD CUM HENHAM

The Team Office,
Stella Peskett Millennium Hall,
Mights Road,
Southwold,
Suffolk,
IP18 6BE

T: 07475 739367

E: admin@solebaychurches.org.uk

W: solebayteamministry.co.uk