

# The Benefice of Aldham, Elmsett, Hintlesham with Chattisham & Kersey



**St Mary's Church, Aldham**



**St Peter's Church, Elmsett**



**St Nicholas' Church, Hintlesham**



**All Saints and St Margaret's Church, Chattisham**



**St Mary's Church, Kersey**

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*South Suffolk is a beautiful place  
to live and work*



## Welcome to our Benefice



*Stained glass window made from paper as part of a celebration of Angels*

We trust that, as you seek to discern if God is calling you to join us in ministry, pastoral work, teaching and leadership, you will see something of our character as church families and sense our desire to honour God in our worship, to understand more deeply our faith in God through Jesus Christ and to share the Good News of God's love in our communities.

In both praying and preparing for this, we have sought to produce a document which is honest about where we are as a Benefice and direct about what we need from, and what we can give to the new incumbent. We will pray for every applicant, and that our profile helps you in the process.

### Benefice context

The Benefice was formed in 2002 following a Deanery reorganisation, when Hintlesham with Chattisham joined Elmsett, Aldham and Kersey.

The Benefice is in a beautiful, rural part of South Suffolk, with five rural churches forming four parishes.

There are three thriving primary schools in the Benefice with which the incumbent and lay ministry team members are actively involved. The schools are all in the same pyramid. It is hoped that the incumbent will continue leading services for our schools and in our churches at major festivals and celebrations, rather than serving on any of the governing bodies.



*Part of the Magpie Trail at Kersey Church*

The modern Rectory, with solar panels on the roof is set in a large garden in the village of Elmsett.

The Benefice has a total population of 2128 (2017 figures) and straddles the A1071 joining the nearby thriving market town of Hadleigh to the county town of Ipswich. There is easy access to the A12 and A14 trunk roads and thereby to London or the Midlands. There are regular train services to London from nearby Manningtree, Ipswich and Colchester.

There is an hourly bus service from Hadleigh to Ipswich and Sudbury.



## The priest we are looking for

We hope that you:

- will encourage our shared ministry within both church and parish communities, especially within our schools
- be comfortable in your own spiritual journey and able to encourage and resource others
- be confident in being a visible and available presence within all five communities
- have an understanding of the nature of rural ministry
- be able to enrich the varied styles of worship and encourage lay ministry
- have an ecumenical heart
- will manage with humour and sensitivity with skills in reconciliation
- want to engage fully with the Diocesan Growing in God initiatives

We would offer you:

- welcoming and caring communities
- five well maintained churches with committed wardens and PCCs (each with a lay vice-chair to assist)
- a desire to support with Benefice administration
- an experienced ordained and lay ministry team with a desire to engage in both ministry and study
- a well maintained house coupled with a care for any wider family

As a Benefice we are challenged by:

- the four parishes being spread over a wide geographical area
- having strong, committed yet aging congregations
- finding ways to engage the younger generations
- meeting financial challenges ahead



*Hospitality is an important part of our welcome and worship*



*Shrine dedicated to the children of Hintlesham in 1932*



*Angel made as part of a festival on Angels*

*Our current weekly Sunday Service pattern in the Benefice*

Week	Time	Place	
1	9.30 10.00 11.00 11.00	Chattisham Elmsett Kersey Aldham	Parish Communion Family Service Holy Communion (BCP) Morning Prayer (BCP)
2	9.30 10.00 11.00 11.00	Hintlesham Elmsett Aldham Kersey	Hintlesham Café Church, Mini Messy Church Holy Communion (CW) Morning Prayer (BCP) Parish Service
3	9.30 10.00 11.00 18.30	Chattisham Elmsett Aldham Kersey	Communion by Extension (CW) Morning Prayer Family Service 18.30 Evensong Summer 16.00 winter Communion by Extension (CW)
4	9.30 10.00 11.00 11.00	Hintlesham Elmsett Aldham Kersey	All Age Eucharist (CW) Holy Communion (CW) Holy Communion Join with Aldham
5		“Rotating”	Benefice Holy Communion (CW)

*Here follows our four individual Parish Profiles*

## **St Mary's Church, Aldham**

### **The Parish:**

Aldham is a small parish 3 miles north of Hadleigh and 10 miles from Ipswich. About 180 inhabitants (including only a few young people) live in only 75 mainly private housing spread over a wide area, surrounded predominantly by agricultural land. There is no obvious village centre and Aldham shares the village hall in Elmsett (which also has the nearest post office, school and pub).



The demographic background of Aldham and indeed the Benefice has changed in recent years due to the decline of farming and local manual work. There has been a gradual trickle of incomers who work from home, particularly those who have found this preferable to a daily commute and who appreciate how congenial it is to live in beautiful south Suffolk.

### **The Church**

Although originally a Saxon church, mentioned in Domesday, the main structure of this small church is from the 14th century. It is Grade 1 listed, with an unusual round tower with Saxon and Norman traces and widespread refurbishments in the late 19th and mid-20th centuries. It is situated up a lane away from the road in an attractive rural setting. It featured prominently as the backdrop in the second series of television's "Detectorists" and has recently been named in a list of the BBC's top 100 places recorded over the BBC's 100 years. The connection with "Detectorists" attracts numerous visitors and it is in any event a popular stopping off point for cyclists and walkers. The church is also an attractive wedding venue due to its idyllic setting.

Weekly service attendance is 14 with 31 on the electoral roll. The PCC has 8 members.

The Parish room, which also serves as the village polling station, is in the churchyard. A lavatory near the church adjoins the Parish Room.

The tower contains a food preparation area which is used to support basic catering for social events

The Parish Share has always been paid in full but in recent years expenditure has exceeded income.

## Church Community



Service every Sunday at 11:00 AM. Service pattern per month is generally: one Holy Communion (alternative months BCP and CW), two Morning Prayer (BCP) and one Family Service (informal structure) and we would aim to preserve this cycle so as to offer a welcoming range of options to all.

The use of the Book of Common Prayer is important and has proved to be attractive to several from outside the parish (there are in fact more members of the congregation from outside the parish than there are from within).

Special services: Good Friday, Easter, Harvest with shared lunch, Carol service with sherry and mince pies, Christmas and occasional choir.

There is one lay Elder who can lead services where appropriate.

### **Strengths and challenges**

Sense of community and support within parish for church fundraising events (much of which relates to the church building rather than to the spiritual aspect).

Cooperation with other parishes in the benefice, though it is felt important that Aldham's own identity is preserved by having a service every Sunday.

The less formal Family Service attracts several people who do not normally attend other forms of service (although children attend only very occasionally).

Supportive PCC, with fabric committee, who together undertake most of the building management issues.

We have an ageing congregation and there are relatively few children or teenagers living in the parish. We feel that the influx of newcomers presents an opportunity for our new incumbent to make personal visits to households in the parish to introduce him/herself. With this in mind it is considered important that there is a service held every week so that local people will come to rely on that fact and thus become regular congregants.

Because of its unobtrusiveness and location, the church is not a physical focal point of the village. Events held at the church, such as the Carol service, should be widely publicised in order to encourage locals to view the church as an integral part of the fabric of the community.

## St Peter's Church, Elmsett

### The Parish:



*The church is blessed with some very gifted flower arrangers who keep the church looking beautiful*

The village has approximately 778 inhabitants, with a mixture of social housing and owner-occupiers. There have been some new build homes in recent years with another 44 houses being built this year. In the centre of the village there is a village hall, a well-stocked shop and Post Office and a family friendly Pub with catering facilities. A travelling library visits regularly as does a mobile fishmonger.

A small commercial airfield and industrial estate provides some employment. People work mainly in Ipswich; Colchester or Hadleigh; London is within a commutable distance. Good shopping facilities are to be found in Hadleigh and Ipswich.

### Village organisations include:

Girls' friendship club run by the Methodist Church; a monthly craft group, working mainly with textiles; a carpet bowls club; an eco group; Zumba class; a walking group; a football club; Elmsett players, a panto group, meeting in the winter months, to rehearse in the village hall; a monthly newsletter and Facebook page keeping locals informed of news, events and celebrations as well as church services and fundraising.



*Joint service on the village Green for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee*

### The School



*Activities enjoyed by our school's visit to St Peter's to celebrate the Jubilee.*

There is a thriving Church of England primary school and a PCC member is a foundation governor on the governing body. With the recent appointment of a new head teacher, the primary school is very keen to maintain and build on its close links with the parish church. Children have transport provided to Secondary schooling in Hadleigh or Sudbury.



The school leavers attend a special project morning service each year but this year, to celebrate the Jubilee, all the children attended a very successful activity day in the church.

The village school uses St Peter's for Easter, Harvest, Christmas and end of term services.

A group including the Methodist Church and St Peter's are currently visiting the school each month, with the next visit using the theme of Christingle.

The school are keen to restart the "Open the Book" visits, which was stopped during Covid. The PCC are planning to set up some training sessions to facilitate this initiative. Monthly Messy Church sessions are held at the Methodist Church and supported jointly with members of St Peter's.

## **The Church**

St Peter's is a well-maintained Grade 1 church, thought to have been built on the site of a previous Saxon Church. It has an early 12<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque Nave, 12<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> century Tower, 13<sup>th</sup> century Porch and a 14<sup>th</sup> century Chancel.

An ambitious restoration programme was completed in 1997, which included a new nave roof, electric heating and lighting at a cost of £130,000.

An extension, on the North side of the church, was built during 2016/17 to add a kitchen and toilet. The church is now registered by the local authority as a "place of safety".



A sound system has been installed including a hearing loop.

The Belfry was renovated between 2003-2015, and has a ring of 5 bells.

There is a one manual chamber organ (*Bevington?*) without pedals, in good condition, in the gallery at the back of the church.

There is pew seating for 100 and the church is often full for special services. It is planned that the parish share will be paid in full for 2022.

## **Church Community**

**St Peter's Quire.** There has always been a strong musical tradition at St Peter's. The choir comprises a group of faithful ladies, who welcome support from others who augment its numbers on special occasions. It meets, fortnightly, for informal rehearsals on a Thursday afternoon. The choir lead the singing of hymns and Taizé chants; the

Lord's Prayer and an anthem is sometimes sung at a Communion Service. The aim is to increase its repertoire of two and three part anthems and at times to reintroduce a Sung Communion. The church is seeking someone who is willing to form and run a separate children's choir.

There is an active Bell ringing group who practise regularly and ring before morning services.

There is a desire to continue to work closely with the Methodist church whilst maintaining a clear Anglican identity.

Special services: Remembrance Service, Easter, Harvest, Christmas Eve Crib and Christingle service and a Midnight Holy Communion.

To support the Incumbent there is a retired Minister, a Curate, a Reader in Training and 2 Elders.

A Christmas Fayre and other fund raising activities are being reintroduced following the limitation caused by Covid.

### **PCC assessment of strengths and challenges**

- There is a high degree of mutual support.
- Tangible good-will exists within the village towards St Peter's.
- The Parish responds positively to good leadership.
- The churchyard is maintained as a conservation area and has links with the local Eco group. The Parish Council generously donate towards the cost of grass cutting.
- The average age of the congregation is on the mature end of the spectrum, however we have families that
- attend our family service. It is hoped to grow this further through links with the school.
- There is an informal system of visiting and pastoral currently discussing



*Part of our Family  
Epiphany Service* re

## **St Nicholas' Church, Hintlesham with All Saints' and St Margaret's Church, Chattisham**

### **The Parish:**

The two villages, 5 miles from Ipswich, have worked together as one community for many years. Chattisham is a hamlet of around 90 households, with no facilities except for the church. Hintlesham, population of 313 households, has the Hintlesham and Chattisham Community Hall, with a thriving Social Club, Hintlesham and Chattisham VCP School( a member of the St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich MAT), a pub, a motor sales and repair shop, golf club with restaurant, a prestigious hotel, a farm shop and cafe, the Live Long Clinic and a church!

Homes are mainly owner occupied with an estate, in Hintlesham, with mixed housing including purpose built bungalows, council owned, for the elderly and Housing Association homes. Both villages are linear with a mix of old and new houses, Hintlesham has three areas of new build. There are some outlying farms and cottages. Several local businesses provide employment, but most people commute to Ipswich, Colchester or London.

There is a strong sense of community with many flourishing organisations – carpet bowls, badminton, gardening club, a women's group, a group for young people and a keep fit group. The Parish Council and Community Council work closely together having recently overseen the building of a MUGA and refurbishing the Play Area, both on the playing field at Hintlesham.

The church is represented on the Governing Body of the school, which has 82 pupils and an Outstanding Ofsted report. End of Term services and Harvest Festivals are held in Hintlesham church. Church led Open the Book sessions take place twice a term. Visits are made by class groups for curriculum reasons to the building, with churchwardens on hand to welcome and assist. The school contributes art work to the church.

### **The Churches:**

**Hintlesham** is a large Grade II listed, predominantly 13c church with a 15c tower, clerestories and a large open chancel area.

There is a sound system, peal of 6 bells and water!

The chancel roof has been repaired in the last five years and a faculty has just been granted for the reopening of the north door to provide an accessible entrance.

There is seating for 150.



**Chattisham** is a small Grade II\* listed 13c church with Victorian and modern restoration. Major repairs are needed.

Seating for 80. Planning permission has been granted and we await the faculty for the installation of a composting loo in the churchyard.

2021 Parish Share of £21,600 was paid in full.

***Hintlesham with Chattisham is one united parish with one PCC and services alternating between the two buildings. There are two churchwardens at each church.***

## **Church Community**

There are two lay elders willing to help lead services. The laity, including the young, take part by reading and leading prayers at all services. Elders take home communion to the housebound.

We feel it is vital that a service of worship that alternates between the churches, is held in the parish every Sunday( apart from 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays). Our All Age Eucharist has enabled children to grow up appreciating the Eucharist as they read lessons and prepare prayers alongside more experienced Christians. A new Cafe Church has just replaced Mini Messy Church.

Several special services are held during the year including: Remembrance Sunday, Song of Praise in the Community Hall, Vocations service, Women's' World Day of Prayer, Christingle and a Time to Remember .

Church led organisations include – Coffee Stop and Lunch Club for the elderly. Friday After School refreshments on the field for children and their carers.

Lent Groups and other occasional discussion groups take place.

A singing group enhances our worship at Christmas.

## **PCC assessment of strengths:**

- We are a prayerful community and have been greatly blessed by the response to our "Growing in God" initiative from which Cafe Church has grown.
- An ongoing and treasured ministry to children continues with (pre Covid), 2 after school clubs and an evening club for teenagers. We have a loose connection with older children and young adults who were brought to confirmation and keep in touch.
- We aim to be a supportive and inclusive church by working in teams to enable us to draw in new people and encourage them to grow into leadership roles.
- The church school in the parish is greatly valued with members of the congregation working there on a voluntary basis, some of whom are Governors.



- We have always paid our Parish Share and expect to finance mission within the parish. We have an active treasurer who quietly encourages realistic giving with annual increments, with most of the congregation signed up to a monthly giving scheme.
- Pastoral Care is led by the LMT but very much shared by members of the congregation.
- We pay towards Benefice administration.
- Chattitude at Chattisham grew out of the need to show grant giving bodies that the building is used for things other than church services.
- “Broadly grouped under this title, we now host regular and ad hoc activities in the church. These have included talks by local experts on a variety of subjects such as local history, hostage negotiations and release, astronomy, the menopause and mindfulness. There are also regular visits by the Suffolk Coffee Caravan and craft groups. These events draw people from within and outside the parish.”

### **PCC assessment of challenges:**

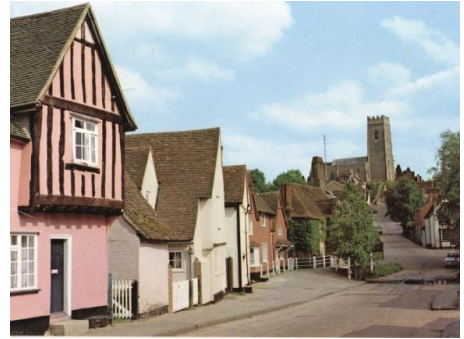
- The time constraint on the priest after Sunday services limits the opportunity for members of the congregation to socialise with them.
- To address this we would like the priest to be available in the parish on a regular basis at Coffee Stop, Hall Lunch and the school to get to know people of all ages.
- At Hintlesham and Chattisham we are happy and ready to encourage children to take communion – after instruction.
- Having two medieval churches to maintain is a challenge, neither of them having proper facilities. Hintlesham has water and a sink, Chattisham is soon to have a loo.
- The Friends of the Churches organises fund raising events with the proceeds split between the two buildings.
- We are an ageing congregation and need to attract the young and more men to church.



## St Mary's Church, Kersey

### The Parish:

Kersey is proclaimed to be one of the prettiest villages in the country and receives visitors from all over the world. The Street is known for its splash and medieval houses, most of which have been faithfully restored and renovated and are mainly owner occupied. There are several holiday lets in The Street.



The Street comprises approximately one third of the total number of homes in the Parish which extends beyond The Street to include Vale Lane, William's Green, Uplands, Kersey Tye and Wicker Street Green



The extended Parish is set in beautiful, undulating agricultural countryside, but most of those who work do so from home or commute to Hadleigh, Ipswich, Colchester, Sudbury or London.

There are families living in the Parish who go back many generations; however most newcomers tend to be retired couples or working professional people – many of whom are committed to the village and stay for many years. There are few people aged between 19-30 and very few from ethnic minority backgrounds.

There is a well-kept Village Hall, a playing field on The Glebe used regularly by the school, well-kept footpaths, and allotments. The Grays Trust is a well-endowed educational charity. The many organisations include FOSMs, the Village Produce Association with its annual flower and vegetable show, Tuesday club, table tennis, Forgetmenots and the Kersey Projects which organises popular and well-attended social events.

Kersey Church School has 36 pupils and uses the church building at least twice a week for collective worship. It also uses the church as a performance space for school plays, nativity, and concerts. The school welcomes outreach from the local incumbent.

### The Church

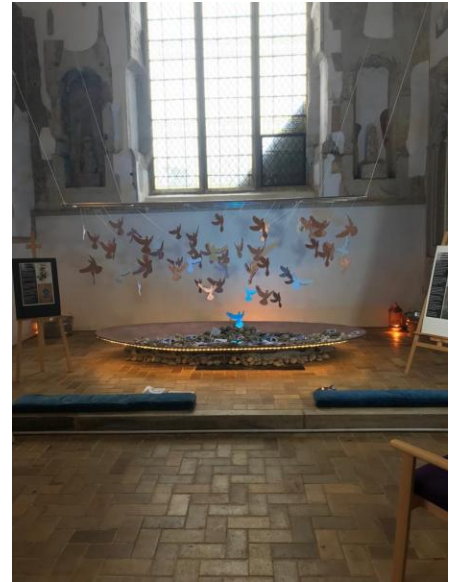
St Mary's is a Grade 1\* listed building constructed over the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries. It attracts many visitors and their comments on the peace and tranquillity of the building and its upkeep are encouraging.

In medieval times St Mary's was an important site of pilgrimage with a Shrine filling the whole north aisle. A new Shrine was re-hallowed in 2020 and this is carefully managed by the PCC with changes to its art installation throughout the year.

The Chancel was re-modelled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its upkeep remains the responsibility of King's College Cambridge.

The Bell Tower required significant maintenance during 2018/19 and houses a peal of eight bells with an active ringing team.

The Church is open daily and a teams of villagers maintain rotas for opening/closing, cleaning, flower arranging and clock winding; and teams are being established to support services as sides persons.



We have a spacious, well-equipped kitchen, toilet and a modern sound-system. With chairs for 150 people, the church offers flexible space for other events.

The PCC ensures all the requirements for public liability management are fulfilled.

Following the recent Quinquennial of 2019, all major works have been carried out including repairs/restoration of windows and repairs to the tower, roof, electrics and lightning conductor.

The PCC expects the 2022 Parish share of £13,560 will be paid in full.

### **The PCC assessment of strengths**

- Willingness to review and change the forms of service, timings and location to meet the demands of modern family life and attract new worshippers
- Small, progressive, committed, good-humoured team willing to accept administrative and building maintenance responsibility.
- Teams of sides persons willing to help with services
- Sense of community and pool of talent and goodwill in the parish which will respond positively to a new leader.
- Villagers who attend services on 'high days and holidays', times of national celebration and who enjoy traditional church hymns and music as well as a small, committed group of regular, weekly worshippers

- A member of the congregation willing to play the organ
- Healthy support for church fundraising events from the parish
- An energetic and ambitious Friends of St Mary's (FOSM) whose focus is on building maintenance, restoration and renewal.
- The local school keen to engage with the Incumbent and Christian festivals, open the book

### **The PCC assessment of challenges**

- A need for pastoral work within the village and outlying especially among ageing parishioners.
- A need to revitalise and grow the congregation by attracting new and younger church goers and those who are 'part-time' Christians, while at the same time meeting the needs of our older, committed and traditional worshipers.
- A diminishing electoral roll of 35; with an active congregation nearer to 14
- Although there is good support for fundraising for the upkeep of the building via FOSM, there is uncertain financial support from the dwindling number of Parishioners committed to regular Parish Giving that will meet the demands of the ever-increasing Parish Share.
- An urgent need to re-engage with and 'reach-out' to those villagers who have lost interest in regular worship
- A need to find the 'next generation' of people to join the PCC so we have planned succession
- Increase the use of the building for weddings, baptisms and community events.
- Only one Foundation Governor
- An ambition for St Mary's PCC to shift its focus away from continual fundraising pleas towards events which fulfil the emotional, practical and spiritual needs of our Parish and surroundings



## The Rectory at Elmsett



The Rectory is located in the village of Elmsett, approximately 3 miles from the market town of Hadleigh with its range of shops and services, including supermarkets, chemists, a doctors' surgery and dentists.

There is a primary school in the village with secondary education mainly undertaken in Hadleigh.

Inside: The front door opens into the entrance lobby with access to the Office/Study, ground floor Shower Room with lavatory, and the central Hallway.



Large central Hallway leading to separate Sitting Room with open fire, Dining Room (both looking out onto the garden) Kitchen and separate Utility Room.

Staircase leads from the Hallway to a balustraded landing on the first floor. Four good-sized Bedrooms and a separate Bath/Shower room with lavatory. Built in wardrobe/cupboards in some bedrooms.

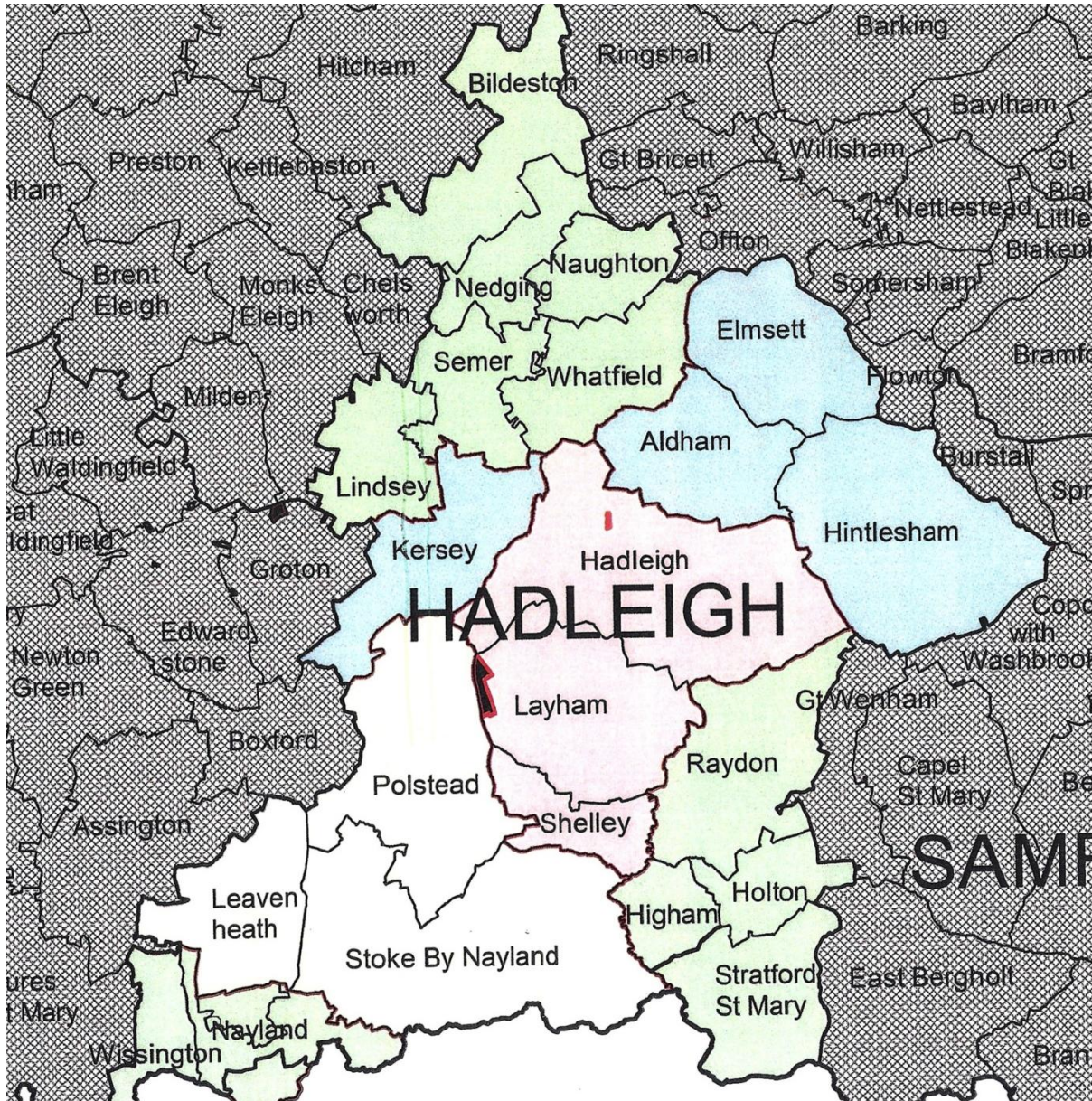
Mains water, electricity and drainage connected. Oil fired central heating.

The property is approached via a driveway with a parking area sufficient for a number of cars and an attached double garage. Large area of garden located at the rear of the property with a paved seating area immediately adjoining the rear and accessed from the sitting room. There is an allotment area to far side of the garden and a summer house and greenhouse.





Map of the Benefice in its context of the Deanery:



## Conclusion

Thank you for reading our profile.

We pray you will be inspired to consider being called to our Benefice where we can offer you:

**five beautiful well maintained churches**  
**set in a beautiful part of South Suffolk with faithful congregations**  
**a faithful ministry team**  
**good links with our primary schools**  
**a modern Rectory set in the rural village of Elmsett**

## **The Hadleigh Deanery**

The four parishes of the benefice stretch across the north of the market town of Hadleigh. The parish of Kersey to one side and the three parishes of Elmsett, Aldham and Hintlesham and Chattisham to the other.

Hadleigh Deanery is made up of 22 parishes with 21 churches and a total population nearing 22,000. The area is mainly rural with the growing market town of Hadleigh, accounting for half the population. However, each community, no matter how large or small in number, has a strong sense of identity.

The five benefices that make up the deanery have a total of five incumbent clergy, two on reduced stipend and three on full stipend, all of whom have been appointed within the last four years. The chapter meets monthly for encouragement and supportive advice. The Diocese and the deanery encourage the roles of reader and elder, as well as a host of other lay ministries that offer support and missional possibilities.

The Deanery Plan was agreed and approved in 2021 and, based around the Diocese "Growing In God", highlights many of the aspirations of the deanery and each benefice. The recent past has seen a stronger link between and within benefices, with a good deal of sharing of ideas and resources.

Financially the deanery is sound and has worked hard to ensure that, over recent years, it has achieved as near to full payment of the Deanery Share as possible. However, the recent pandemic and aging congregations is proving a challenge to the future financial stability. Likewise, there is much goodwill towards the churches and they are often still seen as a focal point of the community.

We welcome a new colleague and hope that whoever is appointed knows that they will find a welcoming chapter, a strong Deanery Team, encouragement and support.

**The Very Rev Jo Delfgou, Rural Dean**

## **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, and the suffragan bishop is the Right Reverend Dr Mike Harrison. Both work from the Bishop's House in Ipswich. They work together closely to help us shape our vision and strategy, and amongst a plethora of other tasks offer 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

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.

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 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’.