

WOOLPIT AND DRINKSTONE BENEFICE PROFILE



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INTRODUCTION

We are looking for a new Rector for our Benefice, the two parishes of St Mary the Virgin Woolpit (“St Mary’s”) and All Saints’ Drinkstone. They are in Mid Suffolk District and lie between Bury St Edmunds (eight miles to the West) and Ipswich (20 miles to the East) linked by the A14 trunk road.

The two churches are about two miles apart, an easy 25-minute walk across the fields.

‘Two fine churches adequately endowed with sustainable fabric funds and both in good order.’

WHAT OUR BENEFICE IS OFFERING YOU

An opportunity to minister to lively and growing villages with already committed and responsive congregations in both parishes.

The friendly support of two active and full PCCs with churchwardens in each parish.

The assistance of three retired clergy, one Reader and one Lay Elder.

Two fine churches adequately endowed with fabric funds and both in good order.

Two parishes with sound finances and a tradition of honouring their obligations to the Diocese in full.

The involvement of generous congregations and teams of volunteer fund-raisers.

Care and consideration for the well-being of the incumbent.

A good Rectory. See Appendix 1 below.





WE ARE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE Who will

Lead and teach, inspiring us to achieve the goals we have set under the Diocesan Growing in God initiative.

Embrace the wide Christian traditions of our church communities.

Take the lead in developing good relationships with children and young families.

Lead and encourage active participation in church services and activities, in partnership with the PCCs.

Become actively involved in village life and work with us to develop relationships with those coming into the new housing developments Woolpit and the untapped potential in Drinkstone.

Build on good relationships with Woolpit Primary Academy, pre-school groups and catchment schools. Through them, develop relationships with teachers, children and parents.

Provide pastoral care for all the community.

Be comfortable working with IT.





GROWING IN GOD

Growing in Depth

Worship within the Benefice will continue to be supported during the vacancy by a team of retired clergy who share in the preaching and presiding in both St Mary's and All Saints', a Lay Reader, and a Lay Elder who leads our 'Worship for All' services in St Mary's and our Messy Church meetings on the first Sunday of the month.

A Wednesday communion service at St Mary's regularly attracts 20-25 people who enjoy the simplicity of the service and staying on for a chat afterwards.

Members of the congregation of St Mary's volunteer to lead us in prayers in most services. Likewise, members of the congregation of All Saints' take part in services by serving, leading prayers and discussion groups, and occasionally leading services.

The previous incumbent held a weekly Zoom bible study which was well attended across the Benefice. The Lent Group has carried on as a

weekly face-to-face bible study group.

St Mary's choir continues to lead the music worship in St Mary's, and at the quarterly Benefice service at All Saints', adding depth and joy to our services.

Our Music Group does the same at our monthly 'Worship for All' services. The Drinkstone community choir, which includes many of St Mary's choir, sang at All Saints' Christmas Carol Service and the Rector's last Service at All Saints'.

All Saints' hosts an occasional, informal 'Third Sunday' service, sharing food around the table, with some worship, discussion and prayer to follow.

A Benefice Holy Communion is held every fifth Sunday in All Saints', while Home Communion is available throughout the Benefice, as required.

Growing in Influence

The Benefice has continued to touch the community on many levels.

St Mary's is used by Roman Catholics on a Saturday evening for Mass; we have a good relationship with that congregation.

A Christian Fellowship (The Room) worships in a chapel at the western end of the village. We work well with them and hold occasional joint events, particularly in Holy Week.

Our outreach programme includes the August sandwich lunches for all in St Mary's, the September Craft Fair and biennial Christmas Tree Festival.

We also hold an annual Walk-about Nativity through the village at Christmastide and a service of worship and witness on Good Friday with the Christian Fellowship in the centre of Woolpit.

The 'Open the Book' team went into Woolpit Primary Academy regularly and the 'Jesus and Me' lunch club ran throughout the year on a Wednesday. The previous incumbent was regularly invited into the school to talk to the children and take the occasional assembly.

Grants were made from the St Mary's Discretionary Fund to families in need to help with heating, food bills and domestic necessities and all families at the Primary Academy on free school meals received a £40 voucher at Christmas.

All Saints' is also used for community benefit with its cloakroom, kitchenette and socialising space at the rear of the church.

'Our outreach programme includes the August sandwich lunches for all in St Mary's.'



Remembrance Sunday, Easter, Carol and Christmas services are well attended.

All Saints' PCC, the Parish Council and the Village Hall committee regularly combine to arrange community events, bringing together volunteers from across the village, as also happens with our churchyard working parties and fund-raising events.

The Tuesday Club (all-comers' morning coffee and chat) and the third Friday Village Lunch provided regular

opportunities for the previous incumbent to play a key part in Drinkstone life.

The monthly bulletins in the Drinkstone parish magazine and the Woolpit Diary, were effective in reaching out to the community, as were the weekly email newsletters distributed by the previous incumbent within the Benefice. We hope the new incumbent will continue these initiatives.



Growing in Number

We have welcomed new members into the St Mary's congregation, largely from the new housing developments in the village, and have successfully integrated them into the life of the church. This has been reflected in our attendances.

The average congregation at our main Sunday service in St Mary's was 44 in the 12 months to June 2023 and 52 in the year to June 2024.

We have lost a few of our older members during the last year but with new

members joining the congregation, the Electoral roll stands at 61 in April 2025.

Restoring All Saints' bells attracted widespread interest and voluntary help. We are building on this; learner practices across the age spectrum are popular activities.

Pre-COVID, All Saints' average congregation was 19-20 and is currently 17, although more at special services.

The Electoral roll is currently 29.

Growing Younger

Messy Church continues monthly in the Woolpit Institute, providing a fun teaching environment for several young families.

Children from the Primary Academy came into St Mary's for a Harvest Thanksgiving service and for a Christmas Carol service. As mentioned above, the 'Open the Book and 'JAM' teams went regularly into the school.

Both the Christingle and Family Carol services at St Mary's were

very well attended.

A few families attend our Sunday services regularly, particularly our 'Worship for All', although numbers have not increased recently.

Drinkstone's Youth Club closed pre-Covid. The Parish Council and the Church-related Educational Charity have been searching for a Youth Leader. Funds are available from the Club and the Educational Charity is ready to back this.

OUR VILLAGE COMMUNITIES

Woolpit

St Mary's serves a parish of about 2,300 people, currently. Woolpit is well known as a 'popular and well served' village, and as a welcoming village with its hub centred on St Mary's and the 'village pump'.

Besides the various shops (which include a bakery, Co-Op and Post Office, Costcutters general store, fish and chip shop, tea shops and hairdresser), Primary School, garage, Health Centre, dentist, Village Hall, Village Institute and various team sports facilities, there are numerous social and sporting groups, which provide a social network involving people with wide-ranging interests.

The village has been zoned for considerable development which is

likely to result in a population increase of about 60%. This is now under way. Our expectation is that, by 2036, Woolpit will have grown into a much larger village without any materially adverse impact on its historic core. With the modern facilities and uprated infrastructure needed to support the housing developments, the village centre will remain a vibrant place and a key hub in the network of nearby communities.

There should be plenty of opportunity for our church community, together with our new Rector, to reach out to newcomers and develop our Christian way of life as our village grows.

Drinkstone

The village has three centres of settlement:

The Street, which includes All Saints' Church, The Old Rectory, the former Church of England

Primary School (closed in 1986), the Black Bourne stream and two historic windmills.

Drinkstone Park. The mansion house was demolished in 1951.

Its stable block was converted to houses and there are two more in the grounds.

Drinkstone Green. This is the busiest part of the Village and the Village Hall is the social centre.

The population is about 600. The majority are working families. About one quarter are retired. There is relatively little social housing.

Drinkstone is noted for its strong community spirit, thanks to which the village was able to rebuild the Village Hall (opened in 2013) after the old one caught fire. The Village Hall is the hub of the village where clubs, classes, drop-in events, pub nights, parties and village events are held; it is in constant use, well equipped, energy-efficient, and a great place for villagers to gather.

Drinkstone is also noted for its friendliness and inclusivity. New residents are welcomed into village life through the Drinkstone Village Newcomers' Visiting Programme.

A regular Newcomers' Afternoon tea is held in All Saints'.

The community is informed of village events and goings on by the Drinkstone Information Service, which emails details about local events, alerts, appeals for assistance and free or for sale items.

The Parish Magazine, a monthly, secular magazine is run by the Church as a community service.

The Drinkstone Educational Trust is a Church-related charity created from the sale of the C. of E. Primary School in the 1980s. It gives grants to residents of all ages, for teaching and learning in the widest sense, including sport, and subsidises many village clubs and classes. Church representatives form a majority of the trustees, the Incumbent and Churchwardens of All Saints' being ex-officio.



OUR BENEFICE CHURCHES

St Mary's is a 13th-15th century Grade I* listed building, widely noted for its 13th century porch and its double hammerbeam roof adorned with an array of angels.

All Saints' is a light and airy, Grade II*, 14th century building, restored in Victorian times.

Both churches are highly prized by their village communities who have in the past given generously of time and money for the restoration and repair of the church buildings.

As a result of this and with grant aid, both churches have been modernised in the past few years and have installed kitchen facilities for refreshments after our services and community events,

and toilet facilities with wheelchair access in St Mary's.

Enough money has been raised in this way to allow works identified in our quinquennial reports to be completed, and to restore and preserve valuable historical artifacts such as the 14th-15th century windows in All Saints', to rebuild its organ and replace its ring of bells, now successfully completed.

Both communities continue to give time and money for the church fabric and both parishes have substantial funds in reserve for this purpose.

All Saints' programme of wildlife conservation now includes swift boxes in the newly renovated bell tower.



OUR CONGREGATIONS AND THEIR CURRENT FORM OF SERVICE

The schedule of our regular services is shown below.

It is customary in both churches to offer refreshments after the main Sunday service and as the occasion demands.

St Mary's

Our church tradition is varied, and our services cater for a range of liturgical tastes. Although we hold a different form of service each Sunday, we do not have four or five different congregations. To the contrary, most of our congregation adopts each service as its own,

confident in the knowledge that individual preferences are in safe hands.

All Saints'

All Saints' is ecumenically broad, being the remaining Christian place of worship in the village.

We use Common Worship Order One Services which are held on 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays, with an occasional informal service held on the 3rd Sunday, usually led by a member of the congregation.

'Both churches are highly prized by their village communities who have in the past given generously of time and money.'

THE PCC AND CLERGY SUPPORT WITHIN THE BENEFICE

Besides the clergy support mentioned above, each parish is administered through its PCC.

St Mary's

The PCC comprises five elected members, one of whom is an Elder, plus two Churchwardens, two Deanery synod reps, and a Treasurer, all of whom are co-opted onto the PCC. We have co-opted our Reader onto the PCC and have elected him as our Vice-Chair. We have also co-opted a part-time administrator onto the PCC.

All Saints'

All Saints' has one Churchwarden, a team of Sidesmen and a strong, proactive PCC. Our Treasurer keeps an expert eye on financial

matters, and we are fortunate to have a Parish secretary with considerable computing skills, who has been helping both churches in the Benefice since the Rector's departure. Blessed with strength in depth, we have two Fabric Officers, dynamic Fund-raisers, an invaluable cleaning team and exceptional flower-arranging team.

Our Benefice Safeguarding Officer works with the Drinkstone and Woolpit PCCs to promote principles and procedures in line with the recommendations of the House of Bishops. Training for volunteers is undertaken at appropriate levels.

FINANCES AND FUND-RAISING

The Benefice share

Our current agreement is to split the Benefice Share between St Mary’s (71%) and All Saints (29%). The 2024 share is £74,219: St Mary’s proportion is £52,694, All Saints’ £21,525. The Benefice has always paid its share in full.

St Mary’s finances

We are blessed with a generous congregation whose weekly/monthly donations have more than covered the cost of running and administering St Mary’s. However, substantial additional funds are needed to meet our commitment to the Benefice share.

Fund-raising

The activities laid on by our fund-raising teams attract much support across both villages, all of which not only contributes to the work of the Church but reinforces the perception of the Church as a central part of village life.

Our fund-raising activities are wide-ranging and usually involve fellowship, food and fun, with an emphasis on outreach. We have, for example, an annual craft fair, a biennial Christmas tree weekend, lecture suppers, garden picnics with entertainment and other events throughout the year. Our fund-raising events are well supported by members of the All Saints’ congregation, and vice versa.

‘Our fund-raising activities are wide-ranging and usually involve fellowship, food and fun, with an emphasis on outreach.’

Our audited accounts

Our audited accounts are available if required, but in summary:

Our overall expenditure in 2023 was £79,747, of which about £24,500 was for running and administering St Mary’s. The rest goes towards the Parish Share and Diocesan fees. We have little or no scope to reduce our expenditure.

Our income totalled £82,207, £60,739 of which came from donations and legacies and the rest from fund-raising and fees, etc.

We have a general reserve of just over £45,000. This should allow us to deal with normal expenditure as it arises and any unexpected expenditure.

Our restricted funds total just over £272,000. 90% of this is held for the upkeep etc., of the church fabric. In addition, we have access to the Woolpit Church Building trust (worth about £8,500) which represents what is left of a village-wide appeal to repair the chancel roof in 1993.

As mentioned above, our small discretionary fund is at the disposal of the Rector to make short-term loans and occasional grants to those in need in Woolpit.

All Saints' finances

We have made a small excess in the General Fund for more than 28 years, except for 2020, the year of 'Covid'.

In 2024 our income was £30,282 against expenditure of £29,629.

Our Parish Share was £21,533. We have fully met our Parish Share requests over that same 28-year period but this is becoming more challenging.

Our major income in 2024 was 52% from donations, 24% from fund-raising, 13% from magazine sales and 3% from fees.

At the end of 2024 we held reserves of £43,753 in the General Fund and £84,762 in the Fabric Fund.

A further £15,000 legacy was received in early 2025 and placed in Fabric bringing that fund to around £100,000.

woolpitstmary.org.uk

However, we have around £80,000 of Quinquennial work over the next year, which we hope to partially fund with grants.

There is also £1,250 in our Rector's Discretionary Fund.

Fund-raising

Our Fund-raising team makes an important contribution to our General Fund by holding many successful events each year, such as Christmas coffee mornings, Wreath-making workshops and Flower Festivals. A three-day Flower Festival took place in September 2024.

Drinkstone and Woolpit have also held an alternating 'Open Gardens' event since 2013 and joined together with tremendous success in 2011 as part of the Lavenham Deanery's celebration of 400 years of the King James Bible.

drinkstonevillage.co.uk/allsaints

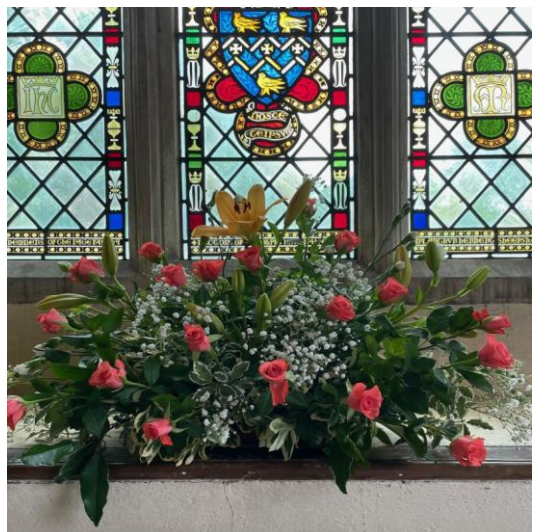
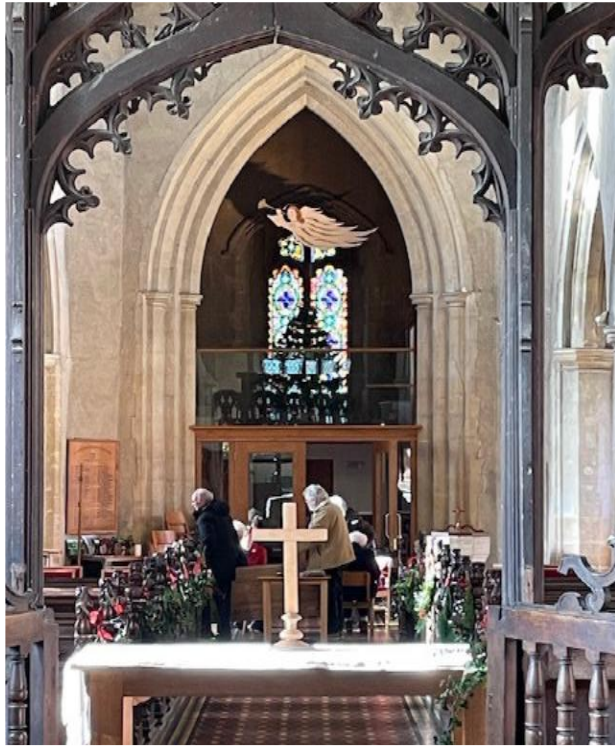


SERVICES IN THE BENEFICE

	St Mary's		All Saints'	
1st Sunday	9.00am 10.45am	Messy Church Holy Communion BCP		No service
2nd Sunday	10.45am	Morning Praise	9.30am	Holy Communion CW
3rd Sunday	10.45am	Holy Communion CW	9.00am	Occasional Informal service
4th Sunday	10.45am	'Worship for All'	9.30am	Holy Communion CW
5th Sunday	6.30pm(S) 3.30pm(W)	Evensong	10.00am	Benefice Communion CW
Wednesdays	10.00am	Holy Communion CW	8.45am	Morning Prayer (when practicable)
Festivals and other services				
Christmas		Christingle		
		Carol service		Carol service
		Walk-about Nativity		
		Crib service		
	11.00pm	Midnight Mass		
Christmas Day	9.00am	Family Communion	10.00am	Family Communion
Holy Week	10.45am	As part of Wednesday Communion service	6.00pm	Benefice Ash Wednesday HC CW
		Maundy Thursday		
		Good Friday Village Witness Reflections		
Easter Day	6.30 am	Dawn service		
	10.45am	Holy Communion	9.30am	Holy Communion CW
Ascension Day			6.00pm	Benefice Holy Communion CW
Harvest Festival	10.45am		9.30am	
Remembrance Sunday	10.55am	Remembrance service	10.50am	Remembrance service in church
As required:	Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms and other special services		Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms and other special services	

GALLERY





APPENDIX ONE

ST MARY'S WOOLPIT WITH ALL SAINTS' DRINKSTONE:

THE RECTORY

The Rectory is a 4-bedroomed detached property on the eastern side of Rectory Lane and located immediately opposite St Mary's Church.

Ground floor – entering via an external shelter porch through the front door to an entrance lobby, off which is the Office (9'7" x 14'11"), with shelving on two walls and 10 power points.

Also off the entrance lobby is the entrance hall. Off this is access to the dining room (11'8" x 10'10") with four power points; and directly opposite, access to the sitting room (22' x 14'11"), with 10 power points, and French windows into the garden.

Further down the hall is a cloakroom, a door to the kitchen (14'6" x 11'8"), which is fitted with the usual storage, other units and built-in store cupboard, and five power points. No cooker.

Off the kitchen is a utility room and boiler-room (10'3" x 5'10") containing an oil-fired boiler and sink and three power points. Plus, a door into the garage (16' x 16'6") and back door leading into the garden.

First floor – access is from the entrance hall via a 14-step staircase leading to the landing.

Off the landing are four bedrooms. Bedroom 1 (13'3" x 13'10"), with four power points), Bedroom 2 (11'8" x 8'8"), which has a small built-in hanging wardrobe, and four power points, Bedroom 3 (9'8" x 8'3") which also has a built-in hanging wardrobe, and four power points, Bedroom 4 (15' x 11') containing an eaves storage cupboard, two built-in hanging wardrobes and a hand basin.

Also off the landing is a separate toilet (7'3" x 3') and a bathroom with bath and sink (7'3" x 6'2"), plus an airing cupboard and hot water tank.

Outside is an enclosed back garden (approx. 15 x 7 yards) with surrounding borders. This leads to the side garden (approx. 20 x 22 yards) with shrubs and trees screening the property from the roadside.

There are 12 solar panels on the roof.



APPENDIX TWO:

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 many 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 about 650,000. The county embraces historic places of interest such as Sutton Hoo and cultural events at Snape Maltings, with the famous annual Aldeburgh music festival. Snape and Aldeburgh lie on the Heritage coast, a haven for lovers of natural history and birdlife. The busy port of Felixstowe is at the end of the A14, which runs west via Cambridge to the Midlands, while 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 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 three 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

Growing in God

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 in 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 <https://www.lightwave.community/growing-in-god-in-the-countryside>).

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; 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, the 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 THREE:

The Deanery of Lavenham

The Lavenham Deanery comprises 7 benefices made up of 27 villages. The Woolpit and Drinkstone Benefice is on the A14 corridor in the north of the deanery.

The Lavenham Deanery Plan envisions our churches 'living as Christ at the heart of our communities' by:

- enabling the ministry and mission of the whole people of God;
- respecting and celebrating diversity within the churches of the deanery;
- offering support to enable and encourage those who minister.

The Lavenham Deanery Plan for growth is currently being revised to reflect individual benefice plans for growth. In particular it is looking to develop specific events and initiatives that will bring people in the deanery together to celebrate, for example a deanery Ascension Day service was held this year at Lavenham Church to which every church in the deanery was invited. The plan will also identify those areas where ministry expertise and training can be shared, for example with Lay Elder training.

The Lavenham Deanery functions well, with all stipendiary clergy required to attend its Chapter meetings, which are usually held on a monthly basis, and Deanery Synod meetings (3 per annum). A Deanery Chapter quiet day is held each year in the summer as well as a post-Christmas dinner. Two Greater Chapter events are held each year, one in the Summer and one during Advent to which all licensed, commissioned and PTO ministers are invited.

Map Of Lavenham Deanery Benefices

