

***Parish Church of St John The Baptist Needham Market
with Badley***



Parish Profile 2022



Who we are.

We are a warm-hearted local congregation, seeking to put Jesus at the Centre of everything we do. Situated on the High Street of Needham Market, our church is where local residents seek spiritual support at times of thanksgiving, like national celebrations and the major festivals of Christmas, Easter and harvest, and at times of sorrow, like Remembrance, as well as the significant life events of baptisms, weddings and funerals. We have an open policy towards baptism and on remarrying divorcees in church. While we are not a diverse congregation, we try our best to be a welcoming and friendly church for the whole community.

We currently celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday. The service is attended by about thirty people of mainly retirement age, and older and is live streamed. It closely follows Common Worship Order 1, using Hymns Ancient and Modern. A few younger families attend informal worship once a month on a Sunday afternoon. We share occasional services with Christchurch and members of our congregation support Christians Together, the weekly ecumenical meeting for us, Christchurch and the Evangelical Church. There are also occasional services at Badley, a redundant church cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust, which are very well attended. We are keen to develop worship in depth and to help us to grow in number.

There is lots of mission potential and many activities: Several of our fellowship are actively involved in the local Town and Community Councils and as governors of the local primary school. We are taking steps to become an eco-church. Our immediate priorities are to build on the ministry of our Food Pantry and the Tuesday Tots' group and develop new forms of outreach. We have recently been introduced to the dioceses "Lightwave" initiative, and after discussions at the PCC we are enthusiastic and confident that we can begin to build the ethos of "Lightwave" into our community. We believe that with the right person to lead and assist us with training we can work together to bring new ways of worship, groups and meeting with God outside of the normal Sunday Church service. We are also keen to embark on a reorganisation of the interior of the Church for which we have already raised some of the funds. This would enable us to use the church building for many things in addition to the normal Sunday morning service.

In recent years, the ministry team has included a curate (who moved on in June 2022) and an experienced licensed reader. We are prayerfully seeking a successor to our vicar who retired at Easter 2022 after sixteen years here. We are keen for lay ministry to be further developed and released in our next chapter.

This fulltime post is for a single church benefice with a four-bedroom new build vicarage on the edge of the town about 0.75 miles from the church.

For further information, please see our website www.needhammarketparishchurch or contact our churchwardens, David Sewell or Ian Jeffreys.

Who we are looking for.

We are praying for someone who will shepherd us in :-

- Reaching out with Christian love in the wider community.
- Helping people to find faith for the first time.
- Nurturing discipleship and mission through small groups.
- Creating a vision for church growth as we move forward.
- Helping us bridge the age gap between worshipers.
- Broadening the appeal of our church to others in the community.
- Recognising the potential of our church, discover what the future holds and enhance our worship, prayer, and faith.
- Helping us to develop creative uses for our church building outside of worship enhancing its standing as a community hub.

We are looking for a person who would : -

- Be a person of prayer and rooted in the scriptures.
- Be evangelistic in outlook and engage in community outreach with small groups and congregations.
- Broaden our existing Christian tradition and be open to us exploring different worship styles.
- Be a team player, motivator, listener, and a connector, a person of discernment.
- Be well organised and able to delegate whilst also be accepting of others' gifts and contributions.
- Be able to drive and be mobile in the community.
- Have a good sense of humour.

What we have to offer: -

- We are a warm and friendly worshipping community with a strong and committed PCC. We are open to change and are a single parish benefice.
- The congregation supports the church with fundraising for various causes and for church funds.
- We run produce stalls during the summer months and have parties and events such as an annual Christmas Brass band concert and a Last Night of the Proms evening, as well as other social gathering during the year.
- Many members of the congregation are also involved with other organisations within Needham Market; one of these being the annual Art Show which is attended by people from far and wide.
- We don't take ourselves too seriously and fun and laughter are part of our backbone.
- We look out for each other as well as those in our community and help when and where needed.
- We will pray and support you, share in ministry and welcome you with love into our community.

We are delighted that you have taken the time to investigate the vacancy in our benefice and hope that you might be the person to lead us forward in our faith.



Needham Market and surrounding area

Needham Market is a small Suffolk town with a population in the region of 5,500 which, with the level of current and planned development, is likely to rise considerably over the next few years. There is an electorate of 3,790. The social mix is fairly wide but the number of people from ethnic minorities is very small. At present, there is a larger than average number of retired people in the town but this will gradually change as new families move into Needham following the planned development.

It is an ancient town with a good mix of shops, cafes/food outlets and general businesses. Apart from people employed in those establishments, the main area of local employment is on the Lion Barn Industrial Estate.

A major and popular tourist attraction is the Needham Lakes recreation area.

A friendly place, with a strong community feel. This is borne out by the large number of voluntary organisations in the town catering for all ages and a wide variety of interests. In addition to thriving football & cricket clubs, Needham Market has various sports clubs and groups, both indoor and outdoor. Many activities are based around the always busy Needham Market Community Centre including the annual pantomime put on by the Entertainment Company. Mention should also be made of the Needham Market Community Council, a general charity to provide funding for local groups, clubs, organisations and other charitable bodies within the local area. The Mix, based in Stowmarket, runs a regular youth work programme in Needham on Friday nights.

Needham is well situated as regards transport facilities. There are regular bus services and frequent daily train services with good connections to Cambridge, Norwich & London Liverpool Street. The town is well served by roads including the A14 and the A140, with fast access to towns and cities in East Anglia and further afield.

The nearest hospitals are at Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. In the town itself, there is the Needham Market Country Practice and adjoining pharmacy. Needham has ample sheltered accommodation, retirement flats & bungalows and, near the centre, is Uvedale Hall care home.

Bosmere Primary School is the only school in Needham Market and our retired vicar was one of the governors. Some Needham primary age children attend Creeting St Mary Church of England Primary School. Older children mostly attend the High Schools in Stowmarket and Stowupland with some eligible to attend Debenham High School, a Church of England secondary school.

In addition to St John's, there are two other churches in the town – Christchurch (an amalgamation of Methodist and URC) further down the High Street and the Evangelical Church on the edge of the town. The Parish of St John the Baptist includes Badley hamlet, which has its own church building which is in the care of the Historic Churches Trust. Badley is a mixture of farm cottages, barn conversions and executive style housing. The land is mainly agricultural with little by way of employment.

Church Information.

Membership:

Our Electoral Roll currently stands at 75

Sunday Worship Services :-

We hold a weekly 10:00 am Eucharist Service Order 1 (25-30 people). We have a regular congregation of between 25 & 30. This number has declined in recent years from approx. 80 to 70 due to increasing age and recent Covid restrictions. Our age range is from 45 upwards and all live in the town or from very close by.

At this moment in time we do not have any young person's attending services in church on a regular basis.

Monthly "Wild Church" is held either in the surrounding countryside or in the church hall and attendance is 10/12.

Special Services attract a larger congregation such as:- Remembrance Day (250 Adults/80 Children), Christmas Carols (75 Adults/5 Children) and a Crib Service (140 mix of Adults and Children).

Occasional Offices

Occasional Offices	No. in 2019
Baptisms	4
Weddings	2
Funerals (in church)	8
Funerals (crem or elsewhere)	3

Discipleship and Fellowship Activities

- Mid-week bible study and prayer group of approx. 6 regular members.
- Monthly Prayer group.
- Meditation group.
- Monthly homegroup outside the church with a membership of between 5 to 10.
- Advent and Lent House groups are well attended when run.
- A small afternoon tea is held on zoom.
- A very active Mothers Union has officers on the Diocese team.
- The Church is open to the public every day of the year.

Outreach Activities

- A small group have taken OPEN THE BOOK into the local primary school and received a great deal of appreciation. Covid stopped this but plans are in place to resume as soon as we get the go ahead from the school.
- “THE PANTRY” is a space where people can come and purchase food stuffs at a single rate of GB £3.00 per bag. This has proved very successful and has a footfall of over 20 people per week. This has potential for further development.
- GLOBAL MISSION: We regularly hold Lent soup lunches, with the proceeds going to the Bishops’ Kagera charity. We collect yearly for the Children’s Society with money boxes, this year we raised £800.00. We take part yearly in Christian Aid collections and give on a regular basis to any Disaster relief funds that are requested.

Events:-

The congregation takes part in and arranges events for the church during the year such as Produce Stalls and the annual Christmas Bazaar. We hold a yearly Christmas Brass Band Concert which attracts upwards of 100 people and marks a start to the Christmas build up. The church has been used for concerts and other social events prior to the pandemic and plans are in place to start these up again.

Communication:-

Services and all church activities are advertised in the Local Town Newsletter, on notice boards around the town, on our Facebook and websites. Lightwave has a communications missionary who will be available if you wish to help us develop this side of our ministry more widely.

Opportunities and Challenges

- The town is booming with new house building in recent years, there are however, pockets of deep need, with many, just about getting by. St John’s does not seem to have been able to connect well with those recently moving in to new housing, or, to those who have the most severe needs. The launch of St John’s Pantry has helped with the latter and the Pantry enjoys growing numbers, however, local families in deepest need are generally not those who proactively come forward for help and are not among the regular users. Relationships with local organisations need further development.
- There is much potential with the local uniformed organisations, resurgent with new and energetic leadership – a Covid success story, local youth outreach by The Mix charity and the primary school. Good relationships with the primary school have been enjoyed, however St John’s has not been able to capitalise upon that work so far.

- The church has had few serious or deeply held issues that come to a head. One can see this as both a positive in that the church has ‘held it together’ and potentially a negative in that the Church is ‘lukewarm’ and lacking clear purpose. Indeed, the ‘middle of the road’ style of worship may enable the congregation to agree, and hold together, but is probably not attractive to new enquirers, particularly say, families moving into the area, who perhaps have little previous contact with organised religion and may struggle to identify with the worship of St John’s. Most who do not find St. John’s to their liking, quietly move on. A pre-Covid estimate suggests that about half those who live in Needham Market who attend church, approximately 100, find fellowship in churches outside of the town. The other established churches in the town are in a similar situation to St John’s viz membership.
- The congregation are willing volunteers, but limited in number and by their advancing years, and the few of working age cannot always be relied upon due to work and family commitments, therefore, much has tended to fall to the clergy. The last two incumbents of St John’s have subsequently been recruited as Rural Dean, “only having one parish of their own to attend to” – diluting the impact of their work in the town. Nevertheless, we have already established a weekly prayer group with a focus on the future of our church and have identified one or two people to undertake Lightwave leader training.
- We believe that the potential of support from Lightwave is an answer to prayer. Overall, St John’s enjoys a central location in the town, both physically, and also to some extent within the hearts and minds of the community, in particular for significant personal and national events, high days and holidays.
- Recent works to replace the roof and repair exterior masonry means that the focus for the coming years can be that of building the community of the church rather than supporting its fabric.
- While the fabric is in reasonable shape, the membership of the church has been declining, the congregation aging, families finding fellowship elsewhere and fewer new faces attending services. Guided by the Holy Spirit to develop a vision, our church could be transformed from an aging congregation to a growing one.

Church Building / Fabric

The P.C.C. has undertaken 3 major projects to the Church during the last 15 years.

No 1

Installed a completely new heating system. Gas fired boiler, copper pipe work and fan convector radiators to the main body of the church, along with associated controls.

Cost £48,653.

No 2

A major contract to undertake repairs to the roof both inside and outside, along with repairs to the clearstory windows and external facing to the outside of the clerestory. This was made possible with support from heritage lottery and local fundraising. Cost £377,000.



No 3

At our last quinquennial it was considered that the buttresses around the church required some major attention with new stones and repointing of much of the buttresses along with some other small repairs while we had scaffolding in place. Cost £49,000 with grants from Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and All churches Trust Ltd.

Finance

Since 2015 we have been successful in raising over £400,000 from national and local grant making bodies, our own fund raising and appeals to the congregation to allow us to complete major repairs and maintenance to the Church roof and the lower levels of the Church exterior, as recommended in the last two Quinquennial Reviews. After completion of this work there still remains around £90,000 in our Restricted Building Funds to help meet the cost of future maintenance and improvements to our Church building.

However, meeting our day-to-day needs remains a major financial challenge. We have very limited Unrestricted Reserves and therefore the general ongoing financial commitment for each year has to be covered by the income we are able to generate during that year. For the 5 years prior to the Covid Pandemic (2015 to 2019) we generated general income averaging just over £60,000 per annum, the largest sources being:

- 68% from the generous giving of our congregation and associated tax recovery,
- 11% from fees for services and burials in the churchyard,
- 10 % from lease of PCC property,
- 6% from fund raising.

The last two years since the start of the pandemic (2020 and 2021) has seen general income levels drop off to an average of just over £54,000, reflecting the inability to hold many of our regular fund-raising activities and the need to close the Church building for varying periods of time and therefore hold regular services at which collections could be taken or fee income generated.

The amount available to meet recurring expenditure over the same pre Covid period was also limited to an annual average of just over £60,000. It has been dominated by our commitment to meet as much of our Parish Share target as possible and we have achieved an annual average of around £50,000 (i.e. over 80% of general expenditure). Nevertheless, in recent years we have fallen short of the target that the Diocese has set for us. In mitigation, this has coincided with the increasing workload placed on our incumbent outside our parish, associated with her appointment as Rural Dean of Bosmere deanery and then also the Stow deaneries.

In spite of the restrictions placed on our general finances, we have remained committed to supporting other worthy causes through specific fundraising and appeals. For example, through our annual Lent Soup Lunches, in the last seven years we have been able to send over £3,500 to support work in our partner Diocese in Kagera and retiring collections have been held to support disaster relief efforts of the DEC and other charitable bodies.

The partnership with Lightwave brings with it a £10,000 contribution to parish share for three years. This will be a bridge, helping us to return to a position where we are able to meet our parish share target in full. We will be seeking strong growth in the numbers of new contributors as well as the continued generous giving of the existing congregation.

Ministry Team

While we do not have an officially established “Ministry Team”, we have had in the past and would like to have one in the future.

David and Ian work hard together as supportive churchwardens and Kate, our Licensed Lay Reader preaches and leads worship regularly and is greatly valued by the congregation.

On Sundays, up to 5 Sides persons undertake the ministry of setting up the church and welcoming people. We are led by ten men and women in the choir and one of three very competent organists. Many members of the congregation take part in reading and leading intercessions in church as well as flower arranging especially for special events, weddings and Christmas and Easter.

A Pastoral Care Group has historically undertaken pastoral care for the community and there is potential to restart something of this nature.

About twelve people have attended a Cursillo weekend and currently two of these serve on the secretariat for St Eds and Ips Cursillo. Churchwarden Ian will be taking on the role as Lay Director for St Eds and Ips Cursillo from July 2022 for a period of three years and sees lots of potential for Cursillo and Lightwave to work together in the parish.

During the vacancy we hope that some of us will be able to complete Lightwave leader training and begin a small Lightwave group. Its first task being to listen to what God is saying to us in the community.

We think there is lots of potential to develop lay and collaborative ministry in St John’s.
God’s Light Shines in Suffolk



The creation of the Lightwave Community with a Bishop's Mission Order covering the whole diocese is an important part of diocesan-wide growth in local mission. The name of the community comes from the idea of light waves being the way in which light spreads into dark places. Lightwave is committed to shining the light of Jesus in Suffolk through acts of kindness and practical service as well as worship and witness and has a special heart for small rural places.

Small groups shining Christ's Light.

The Lightwave Community is made up of small groups, shining Christ's Light all over Suffolk. Our groups meet in homes, pubs, offices, schools and online. We are simple worshipping communities that work alongside and complement traditional Sunday services. We try to be down to earth and to be the sort of place you can feel at home even if you've never been part of church before.

Each group aims to find its unique way of shining Christ's light in the local community. Lightwave groups can deliver food parcels, visit the isolated, run community choirs, lead after-school clubs, support parents and toddlers, welcome people moving into the neighbourhood, empower teenagers, engage with nature, organise clay-pigeon shooting... You get the idea. We often use the Suffolk Discipleship Pathway as a model for how we help us offer a path to faith. <https://lightwave.community/resources/the-suffolk-discipleship-pathway>

Listening and learning together

In a Lightwave group everyone has a part to play. It is not just for leaders. Everyone has talents. Everyone has needs. We care and pray and learn and work and have fun together. Lightwave offers incumbents monthly mentoring and will bring free training to your benefice when this is helpful.

Love God. Love People.

Jesus said the greatest command is to Love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind soul and strength and the second is to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. It's simple really. Our ability to love people and ourselves comes from receiving God's love. Springing from this are the 5 value-based practices of Lightwave groups:-

*All Involved Becoming Disciples Creating Community
Doing Evangelism Encountering God*

“God calls the church in each generation to show and share his love in ways both old and new. I believe Lightwave is one of the new ways - rooted in the wisdom of the old - that God is calling us to embrace here in Suffolk.”

Right Revd Martin Seeley, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, pictured with Archdeacon Sally Gaze, Leader of the Lightwave Community



Find out more by watching <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LqUlfY1k8Y> and visit our website <https://lightwave.community/>

