

# Priest-in Charge



# Mid-Loes Benefice

Eight parishes in the beautiful, rural Suffolk landscape.  
November 2021

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Cover pictures: Joint PCC meeting and some of this year's Holiday Clubbers.

# Welcome to our Benefice profile!

Our Benefice Prayer  
used since September 2020

Lord God, we pray for your guidance and blessing as we strive to work and worship together more closely during the coming months.  
May we seek to know your will as we move forward together in faith.  
Let us respond to your love with worship and joy,  
offering our own particular gifts to you,  
and using them, in thankfulness, in your service.  
Make us inclusive and welcoming, supportive, patient and caring,  
sharing each other's happiness as well as tears.  
As we encircle one another with prayer and encouragement,  
we pray that we may grow and live together in your love.  
Amen.

Mid-Loes Benefice is just thirteen years old, having been formed by the amalgamation of two existing benefices. The 8 parishes lie to the south-west of Framlingham not far from the Suffolk Heritage Coast, Snape Maltings and the two urban towns of Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds.

Our Priest-in-Charge will be appointed to a full-time post and the joint PCCs see this as an exciting prospect coming as the benefice recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic and an 18-month vacancy. Both of these have impacted on Parish Share and we are determined to raise this by 9% to meet our commitment to the Diocese.

We have a very dedicated Ministry Team comprising an SSM Assistant Minister and 3 Elders, supported by a retired Priest with PTO. Laity are enthusiastic in supporting mission and worship with a small number eager to pursue licenced ministry.

We do not underestimate the challenges of rural ministry but we foresee an exciting time ahead and we are eager to grow the green shoots established during the vacancy, eg a recently started coffee morning straight after the school run that offers the opportunity for younger parents and church members to meet and socialise; and a long-established summer Holiday Club – oversubscribed in 2021 and eagerly anticipated in future years.

We are looking for a priest who will work with, and alongside, the existing congregations and Ministry Team to explore new avenues of mission and outreach.



Benefice Rogation Sunday 2021 – Monewden St Mary's

Are you interested in joining us? Please read on.....



**We can offer our new Priest:**

<b>S</b>	Support through prayer and encouragement
<b>U</b>	a Unique Mid-Loes welcome and vibe
<b>P</b>	Patience – as you get to know us and we get to know you
<b>P</b>	Partnership working across the benefice of 8 churches
<b>O</b>	Our time to help you achieve your (our) objectives
<b>R</b>	Really hard-working PCCs
<b>T</b>	Time away from the benefice for an annual Retreat



Conversation after a Service:  
St Peter's, Charsfield



Conversation after a Service: St Mary's, Monewden.

**In our new Priest we are looking for someone who values and practises:**

<b>P</b>	Pastoral care as a paramount attribute – reinforced by Prayer
<b>O</b>	Open and welcoming manner – Open, also, to developing new ideas
<b>T</b>	Team Player – happy to work with those locally Ordained, Licenced and the Laity, who is resilient and not easily discouraged
<b>E</b>	Engagement with the community and local schools, in mission and outreach, in sharing the love of Jesus
<b>N</b>	New ideas person – nurturing and fostering the practice of generous Christian giving and stewardship
<b>T</b>	Teacher of the Word, a Tutor in prayerfulness
<b>I</b>	Inspires and brings energy to the position of Priest-in-Charge
<b>A</b>	All ages catered-for in the use of Liturgy and Teaching
<b>L</b>	a Listener – able to discuss with and respond to others

## **Our Ministry Team:**

### **Reverend Kathleen Martin (S.S.M. Assistant Curate)**

I was born in Dallinghoo into a Christian family. I lived in Dallinghoo throughout my childhood years until marrying, Brian, a farmer from Monewden and moving to Hoo, where we lived for twelve years, then finally moving into the family farmhouse in Monewden in 1986. I worked alongside Brian on the arable and livestock farm. Brian and I have three children and six grand-children, who are a great joy to us.

I have been a regular worshipper at Monewden church and joined the PCC in 1984, later becoming churchwarden and then a lay elder to the benefice. I have been a member of the healing/prayer group for many years. I was fortunate enough to be trained on the first AOP course and was Priested in June 2019. I am currently Assistant Curate in this benefice and very much enjoy being a part of the Ministry Team.

### **Mary Vellacott (Lay Elder)**

I moved here 54 years ago and was approached by the Rector regarding starting a Sunday School. A Youth Club followed shortly after, including ALL Secondary age children. I became Lay Elder around 20 years ago, leading Family Services and Morning Prayer. Over the years I have co-ordinated the Christmas Crib, initiated the Holiday Club, been involved in Bible study groups and made pastoral home visits. I envisage the latter being the particular route of my future ministry. My strong Christian faith was augmented by my late husband who was ordained and served within Orebeck Benefice. I look forward to supporting our new Priest-in-Charge and our Ministry Team in prayer and fellowship.

### **Jo Reed (Lay Elder)**

I have lived in Earl Soham for 32 years, bringing 2 glorious boys into the world and being encouraged to take part in village and church life by this friendly and supportive community. I was confirmed here, my sons baptised and confirmed also, and was called to take on this Ministry Team role. I enjoy taking Family Services across the benefice, am responsible for the village Christmas Crib, help co-ordinate the Holiday Club, organise the World Day of Prayer across the benefice and am Foundation Governor at Charsfield CofE Primary School. As a recently retired Primary School teacher, my strengths are working with families and children – it would be lovely to see this grow!

### **Amber Pearce-Wright (Lay Elder)**

I was born into the benefice 21 years ago, into a Christian family living in Monewden. It soon became the norm to attend weekly services with my family, and my Christian faith grew. I was confirmed in Brandeston alongside my stepdad and licensed as a Lay Elder in Framlingham in 2017 at the age of 16. I felt a calling to follow in my grandmother, Kathleen's, footsteps and became a very proud granddaughter watching her become an Assistant Curate and continuing my religious journey alongside her. I am now living in Ipswich but I enjoy coming back to the benefice every other Sunday to help lead family services and morning prayers. Being a young elder has helped me engage with the younger members of our benefice. I look forward to welcoming our new Priest-in-Charge.

### **Revd Wendy Gourlay (Retired S.S.M. with P.T.O.)**

Ordained in 2011, after a career in Occupational Therapy whilst a Reader, I served Curacy in the neighbouring Carlford benefice, where a pastoral, collegiate and creative ministry, as musician and artist, developed. I have experience leading retreats (art focussed) and presenting Diocesan Quiet Days with Bishop Mike. 'Retiring' in 2018, with PTO, I happily support Mid Loes ministry team, conducting services 3 Sundays monthly. With contemplation and Celtic Spirituality close to my heart, I have led Deanery Taizé services with Orebeck Benefice, some online during Covid lockdowns, and a Christmas Season of Reflective Worship. Since January 2021, I have compiled a weekly home worship resource for Mid-Loes, *'The Essence'*. It is distributed by email, offering prayer and a Christian message referencing the appointed texts. I look forward to sharing God's love, in this place, with our new Priest-in-Charge.

When compiling this profile each PCC was asked to consider the following six questions. Their replies have been condensed to avoid repetition. However, the *Wordles* embedded in the answers take account of the full text of their answers.

### Good news from our parishes:

Across the benefice our churches sit in friendly villages, each with a strong sense of community. All are well-placed to play a central role in village life – the focal point where key family and life’s milestones are celebrated. Villagers overwhelmingly support fundraising events and, as a result, the churches are generally in a good state of repair. New homes have been built across the Benefice and newcomers are welcomed as they come to live in our small, rural communities – surrounded by beautiful countryside. Without exception our PCCs are dedicated and hard-working – eager to work with and be led by a new Priest-in-Charge. Our SSM Curate, Kathleen, has just completed her initial training and is staying with us to continue promoting new initiatives across the benefice.



### What are our greatest strengths?

Our churches are blessed with a group of loyal worshippers who maintain a legacy of welcome and friendship towards all. Our buildings and churchyards provide a place of quiet and tranquillity alongside their importance in some villages as the only community space. Our ability to adapt and change has been proven since the establishment of the benefice, 13 years ago. Our links with the two Primary Schools in the benefice are important in offering a wider engagement with the Gospel Message than just Sunday services. We are superbly served by a hard-working and dedicated Ministry Team whose talents are many and varied. Our great fortune, also, is having available talented musicians who serve as church Organists through the year. Communities are supportive of the fundraising events held across the benefice.



### What are the most urgent challenges?

A common thread across every parish’s response to this question is a desire to find new ways to engage (and re-engage) with all members of our communities. Alongside this, maintaining and supporting the current core of worshippers is also crucial. Post-Covid, people may have lost the “habit of church” and re-establishing those ties are vital. We need a Priest-in-Charge with good pastoral skills who has the enthusiasm to enter into village life. We also need to ensure that – as a benefice – we can meet the financial requests made of us. So we need to find new and innovative ways of raising funds and increasing monthly giving so as to meet in full the Parish Share. Reinforcing the church as a lead-player in the community with an impact far-beyond Sunday worship is also a priority.



A new initiative: Coffee in the church after the school-run. St Peter’s Charsfield.

Christingle-at-Home during lockdown 2020. St Mary’s Earl Soham



**Describing our ambitions for five years’ time.**

Together, we will have established an inclusive programme of worship encompassing traditions old and new and appealing to all ages. Villagers will experience a vibrant, thriving and caring church – a real Christian witness to and for our communities. This nurturing church would offer joyful celebration and also support and healing to those in need. The

benefice churches would spread the Word and Love of God with joy and enthusiasm. Our Ministry Team will have been augmented by others who respond to God’s call to Lay or Ordained Ministry. We will have secured the future of Ministry by meeting, in full, the annual Share requests from the Diocese. Our buildings will remain in good order. Our Priest-in-Charge will be well-established in the benefice supporting us as we continue our Pilgrim Journey.

**What do we have to offer our Priest-in-Charge?**

A Ministry Team that has worked very effectively and prayerfully – particularly during the Vacancy – and are now ready to respond with enthusiasm to the appointment of a new Priest-in-Charge. The legacy of a Children’s Holiday Club that was oversubscribed in 2021 and looks to build on those strong foundations. A modern vicarage in a village setting with a “Good” Primary school on the doorstep and “Outstanding” High Schools within an easy drive. Church buildings in a good condition. Experienced and hard-working PCCs. A recognition that change may require compromise but, in the long-term, the benefice is greater than the sum of its parts. A sincere and warm welcome to a beautiful part of Suffolk with the sea, rivers, walks, wide skies and countryside near at hand. The potential to grow God’s Church in these eight villages alongside a core of committed and prayerful Christians eager to do more and work with you.



**If there was a key focus for the new Priest-in-Charge?**

It would be to strengthen and re-energise the church and its mission as an asset to the community it serves.

Together we would achieve this by: recognising, encouraging and supporting entrants to both lay and ordained ministry to enable us to offer greater outreach; engaging with families – using the springboard of the two Primary schools – capitalising on the skills of a new Priest-in-Charge who is pastorally-minded, approachable and inspirational, able to recognise the varied age-profiles across the parishes and balancing the needs of all ages and traditions. This could be achieved by them being a very visible presence across the benefice – supporting individual village events whenever possible, comfortable in “cold-calling” newcomers to the villages – an empathetic person, willing to share their love of God, willing to engage – to build bridges.

engaging  
recognise  
pastorally  
build  
community  
families  
encourage  
incumbent  
important  
team  
Benefice  
People  
ministry  
lay  
supportive  
requirements  
large  
worshipping  
part  
providing  
parish  
entrants  
encourage  
committed  
poor



Some of the 50+ cyclists from Audax-UK – the long-distance cyclists club – enjoying a well-earned break and the hospitality of St Mary’s, Ashfield.





Our Festival Church:  
The Priory of St Mary,  
Letheringham



**The Benefice in numbers:**

Parish	Population	Households	Parish	Population	Households
Ashfield	234	86	Charsfield w Debach	355	148
Cretingham	196	106	Dallinghoo	171	76
Earl Soham	491	203	Hoo	90	47
Letheringham	70	33	Monewden	120	56

**Organists:**

We are blessed in having a team of skilled and resourceful organists – many of whom are prepared to travel across the benefice if required. Occasionally, music for services is resourced from CD or other media. Currently, there are no church choirs but, especially at Christmas, small music groups are formed to augment worship.



Saturday Café – St Mary's, Monewden

**Bellringers:**

Three of our churches, Cretingham, Earl Soham and Monewden have peals of 6 bells which are rung regularly. Ashfield and Dallinghoo have tolling bells. Other churches have bells which, sadly, cannot currently be rung.

**Service pattern:** 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday – Benefice Holy Communion – venue rotates around the benefice. During the rest of the month all the churches have 2 further services (Earl Soham has 3) which are a mix of Holy Communion, Morning and Evening Prayer or Family Service. Five-month Sundays allow for further flexibility.

As a Festival Church Letheringham holds about 7 services per annum – celebrating the key Christian festivals.



### Communications:

The benefice magazine is published monthly and is distributed to all households in each parish in printed or electronic form. Alongside church notices and events, other local organisations use it as a means of publicising their activities. The Priest-in-Charge or a member of the Ministry Team is asked to contribute a short article to each edition.

The benefice website : ([www.mid-loes.com](http://www.mid-loes.com)) is regularly maintained and holds information about the Ministry Team, a pen-portrait of each church along with a local contact, that month's service schedule and an archive of past magazines. There is also an e-mail link to the Editor who can forward messages to the relevant benefice officer.



The Peace Bell Project – St Peter's Cretingham 2018 – visiting the foundry to see the casting of new bell.

### Deanery of Loes.

Loes Deanery is a rural deanery of many smaller villages with three larger population centres (Debenham, Framlingham, and Wickham Market). There is a total population of about 15,000 people across the deanery. There are good schools, teashops and pubs, and it is not far from great coastal destinations, larger towns such as Woodbridge, while being relatively central when it comes to Diocesan meeting points.

We enjoy being a part of a Deanery together, serving and supporting one another in our shared vision of growing Jesus' kingdom in this place. In particular, Orebeck and Mid Loes Benefices have a healthy history of shared ministry, mutual support and encouragement.

Chapter meets regularly and there is a growing sense of care, encouragement and good relationship. We look forward to welcoming a new colleague into our deanery and will do our utmost to support you in your new ministry.

Revd Leslie Siu: Rural Dean

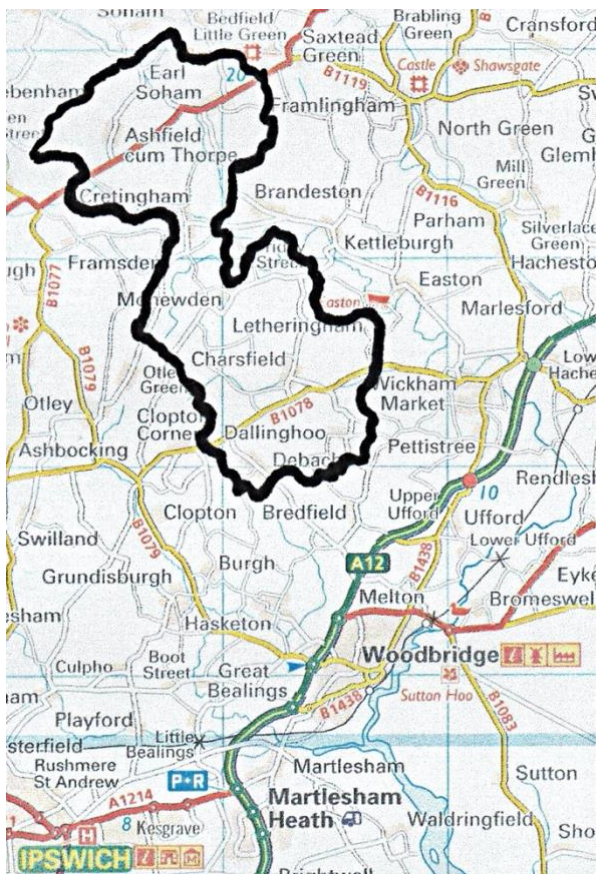


Open Gardens fundraiser – younger villagers making mini-gardens – St Mary's, Dallinghoo

Refreshment in the sunshine  
St Andrew & St Eustachius, Hoo



## The Benefice of Mid-Loes.



The benefice comprises eight parishes with a total population of around 1,750.

Every parish has its own church – all of which are listed. Six of the villages have village halls.

There are Primary schools in two of the parishes – Charsfield (C of E Academy) and Earl Soham (Community). State Secondary education is provided in Debenham (C of E Academy) and Framlingham (Academy). Framlingham also has a private school – Framlingham College.

Direct rail links to London and Peterborough can be accessed from Ipswich and the East Suffolk line connects Ipswich with Great Yarmouth via Woodbridge. The A12 trunk road runs close to the eastern boundary of the benefice.

## The Rectory.

The Rectory is in Earl Soham and is a modern five-bedroom house set in an elevated position on a quiet lane with views over open countryside.

Downstairs there is a fitted kitchen with utility room and cloakroom. An adjacent dual-aspect dining room, together with a roomy study and spacious lounge with patio door opening to the front garden completes the ground-floor layout.

Upstairs three double bedrooms plus a spacious single with added storage and a traditional single are complemented by a family bathroom and additional shower room. A walk-in airing cupboard opens off the landing.



Outside there is a double garage and mature gardens. A paved pathway leads from the driveway through the churchyard to the church door. There is oil-fired central heating and the property also benefits from roof-fitted solar panels supplementing the energy needs of the house.



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

**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



**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 God in the Countryside', overseen by the Archdeacon for Rural Mission. This focusses on nurturing and discipling new Christians through small Lightwave groups and hubs such as the one being established at Bungay. (The Growing in God in the Countryside project plan is available among the documents at [www.light-wave.org/vacancies](http://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 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’.

We hope you will come and join us on our journey!

To find out more, visit [www.cofesuffolk.org](http://www.cofesuffolk.org)



The diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich strongly encourages all incumbents to promote the growth of small missional groups and fresh expressions of Church in their benefices. “Lightwave” has been created with a diocese-wide Bishops Mission Order in order to support clergy and lay people to work together in mission-shaped communities, reaching out in innovative ways.

The Lightwave Community meets in small groups in homes, pubs, offices, schools and other places and complements other ways of being church. The name of the community comes from the idea of lightwaves 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.

Each lightwave group aims to do one activity together to bless their local community and to share faith in their locality or network. Each group receives support and training in their outreach through a growing network of coaches. Each is mainly concerned to bless people who are exploring faith for the first time, while simultaneously cooperating closely with local parish churches and others. The Lightwave Community is being developed through a Project called “Growing in God in the Countryside” funded by the Strategic Development Unit of the Church Commissioners until 2025. While both urban and rural Christians are part of this community, there is a particular focus on helping 1500 new disciples come to faith in rural areas in the period of the funding. Many Lightwave groups are planting fresh expressions of Church. The understanding is that such fresh expressions of Church will be

new or different ways of being established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

The Lightwave Community is developing three Rural Resourcing Churches, in different parts of Rural Suffolk to create and support the development of the small missional groups in their area and to intentionally provide sufficient critical mass for particular ministries which are currently under-represented in rural churches, for example with young adults and those in lower income brackets. Every part of the Lightwave Community has a vision for the great wave of God's love, bringing light to our county.



making Jesus visible through loving action

Loverural (to be launched in early 2020) – is about “making Jesus visible through loving action” in the Suffolk Countryside. It is part of the diocese's strong commitment to rural areas. Loverural has 3 strands:-

- a) Drawing attention to the enormous role of the rural Christianity in building social capital
- b) Acting as a convenor for projects and congregations in the countryside including those of different streams and denominations so that good rural practice can be shared and mutual support offered
- c) Enabling those engaged in Christian-based social action to gain confidence and wisdom in how to make exploration of the Christian faith accessible to those engaging with their initiatives

[www.light-wave.org](http://www.light-wave.org)