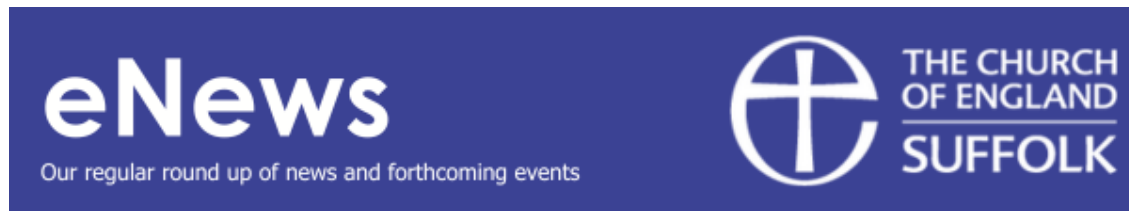
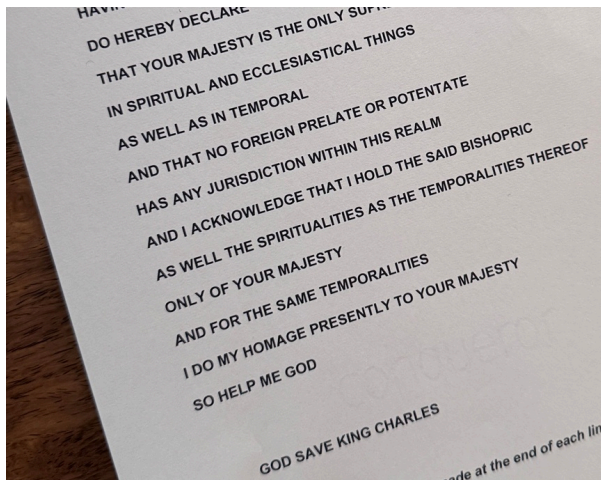


Thursday 4 December 2025



Bishop Joanne meets the King today



Our new bishop, the Rt Revd Dr Joanne Grenfell, reflects on paying homage to King Charles III when she met His Majesty at Buckingham Palace today. The meeting was another milestone in her appointment, succeeding Bishop Martin Seeley who served as our Bishop for nearly 10 years before his retirement this year.

Bishop Joanne now has temporal rights in which she can licence new clergy, and to act as patron in some parish

vacancies. It also means that Bishop Joanne can start planning her service of welcome which will take place in front of hundreds of worshippers on Saturday 24 January at St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Bury St Edmunds. There will be an international presence to include bishops from our partner dioceses in Tanzania, East Africa.

Her induction period during the last few months has included meeting many community leaders, ministers in the Diocese, and diocesan staff. Bishop Joanne has also recently moved house to Ipswich. Bishop Joanne chose Psalm 122 to be read with the King as she took her oaths. Discussing her choice, she says: *"I always have a sense of joy as the music for a service begins; the opening words of the Psalm stir something in me and remind me how close all are to God, never less than when we come to praise and adore God. The Psalm also reminds me that I am called to pray for the city (town, village, county, community) where I serve, for its peace and wellbeing, and for the good of all its people."*

She adds: *"Of course, the people of Gaza and Israel have been particularly on my heart over the last two years, and so praying 'for the peace of Jerusalem', as the psalmist expresses it, also reminds me of the conflict there, and in other parts of the world, particularly Ukraine. I'm prompted to reflect on how much more still needs to be done to build just and lasting peace, across the globe, and in our own Suffolk communities."*

She says: *"When meeting the King I was reminded of the sense of faithful service that the role of a diocesan bishop involves, a role which the King deeply understands because of his own task of defending the faith and serving the whole of our country. I was touched to think that he would pray with me and offer encouragement to this new ministry as a bishop for Suffolk."*

Officially known as paying homage to the King, the meeting was a defining moment of her career serving within the Church of England. *"I am from a very ordinary background. I was educated at a state school in Teesside and was the first in my family to go to university. I couldn't have imagined, as I was growing up, that I would take on a job that involves serving God with the people of Suffolk on my heart, speaking on matters of faith and the common good in the House of Lords, and meeting the King as I prepare to do all that. I feel the responsibility of using these opportunities to advocate for young people and help open doors for them to serve their local communities and to make a contribution to national Church and political life too. Paying homage to His Majesty the King reminded me of the sense of faithful service that the role of a diocesan bishop involves,"* says Bishop Joanne.

Crowds gather at Suffolk church to cheer on star on first stop of ultramarathon



Big crowds braved the rain at St Mary's Church in Rougham to cheer on Kevin Sinfield on the first stop of his gruelling ultramarathon challenge.

The former rugby league player is taking on seven ultramarathons in seven days, to raise money in aid of motor neurone disease (MND) research. He completed his first ultramarathon in Suffolk on Monday 1 December in tribute to former

Ipswich Town striker Marcus Stewart, who lives with the condition, crossing the finishing line at Portman Road. Kevin was met by big crowds in Rougham, including schoolchildren from neighbouring Rougham VC Primary School and Acorns and Woodlands Pre-School, alongside the village's community choir. Read the full story on our [website here](#).



Together we pray: We are delighted that both Archdeacon David and Gary Peverley will be presenting Together we Pray next week beginning on 8 December. The Revd Canon Eleanor Goodison will be presenting the prayers for the week beginning 15 December, follow by a two week break for Together we Pray over Christmas. Daily prayers will continue in the New Year from the week beginning 12 January 2026 led by the Revd Diane Grano.



Advent Calendar: Advent has begun, and we hope you have been enjoying our own Social Media Advent Calendar!

Look out for our daily posts on the Diocesan Facebook page at 9.00am, featuring children and volunteers from the St Augustine's Bubble Church Group. A huge thank-you to the Revd Ros Williams for her wonderful work in creating the films—and for bringing so much joy to the children and puppets alike!

Many of our churches are offering family-friendly services this season, including Christingles, carols, Christmas tree festivals and so much more. To find your local family service, please visit www.achurchnearyou.com.

Farewell Archdeacon Sally



Since 2018 Archdeacon Sally has been leading our Diocesan rural mission activities. She has been dedicated to tackling rural isolation and nurturing rural mission through small church gatherings. Since 2019, she has headed *Growing in God in the Countryside* and overseen the launch of The Lightwave Community under a Bishop's Mission Order.

As the *Growing in God in the Countryside* project draws to a close at the end of this year, Sally's role as Archdeacon for Rural Mission will also come to an end. We would like to personally thank Sally for all her hard work and her commitment to enabling people to explore faith in rural communities. We are deeply grateful for all she has contributed.

Farewell Service for Archdeacon Sally Gaze | Sunday 11 January, 3.30pm | St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1LS

Please join us for Archdeacon Sally's farewell service on Plough Sunday. The service will include blessing of the plough, refreshments, a thank you to Sally for all she has done and a Lightwave Celebration with stories from across The Lightwave Community. [To book please click here.](#)

InHarmony Update

For the past ten years, Richard Hubbard, Music Development Director, has been leading the Cathedral's InHarmony Project, working across the Diocese to resource and equip congregations, helping them make the very best of music in worship. His work has been greatly appreciated by many throughout the Diocese as well as at the Cathedral. Unfortunately, from the end of this year, the InHarmony Project will come to an end and so it has been mutually agreed with Richard that he will conclude his work with us on 31 December 2025. We are pleased to share that although this role is ending, Richard may continue to support the Cathedral and parishes within the Diocese as a freelance musician.

Throughout its ten-year history, InHarmony has worked closely with the Cantus Firmus Trust, a Suffolk-based charity whose mission is to enrich Christian worship through music and the arts. Richard is the Trust's Artistic Director, and will remain available as a consultant to churches seeking advice or support with music in worship. Further information can be found at www.cantusfirmus.org.uk.

Please note that the email address music.development@stedscathedral.org.uk will be closed after 31 December, but Richard can be contacted directly at richard.hubbard@cantusfirmus.org.uk.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Richard for all he has contributed through the InHarmony Project over the past decade, and we wish him every success in his future work.



We are delighted that both Archdeacon David and Gary Peverley will be presenting Together we Pray next week beginning 8 December.

Mission and Ministry Events

Exploring the Old Testament | Wednesday 14, 21, 28 January; 4, 11, 25 February; and 4 March 7.30 - 9.30pm | Earl Stonham Village Hall IP14 5HJ

The Old Testament is the larger part of the Bible and has far more to say than the New Testament about things like the life cycle (birth, marriage, death), sickness and health, daily work, the environment, social justice, and so on. In other words, it relates to life as we know it on a day-by-day basis. In this short course, Hugh Williamson will try to open our eyes to some of this wealth by surveying in an engaging manner all the different types of material in the Old Testament, very much with an eye on how we can apply it in our own times in both church and society. [Book here.](#)

Handling Conflict Constructively | Saturday 17 January 9.00am - 4.30pm | Saxmundham Church Hall, Saxmundham IP17 1ES

As part of the commitment to equip Church Leaders for the challenges of ministry, we are running a Bridge Builders 'Handling Conflict Constructively' training day. The day will start at 9.00am with welcoming drinks, with the course starting promptly at 9.30am. Lunch is included. For more information on Bridge Builders as an organisation [please see their website.](#)

Places are free of charge but numbers are limited and are being offered on a first-to-respond basis. If you would like to take up the offer of this valuable training, please register [here](#). (Please note: this link is for Clergy and LLM only - log-in is required).

The only way is Ethics! | 20, 27 January; 3, 10, 24 February; and 3 March | 7.30 – 9.30pm | Earl Stonham Village Hall IP14 5HJ

The Christian Ethics module is a six-session course which explores the history of ethical thought and also everyday issues and moral questions from capitalism to the environment. This module, led by the Revd Rachel Revely, aims to further develop moral thinking, appreciation and judgment that is appropriate within the context of Christian teaching and pastoral ministry, and Christian living. [Book here.](#)

Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent | Wednesday 21 January at 12.30pm | Online



Join this special webinar to explore Lent and Easter 2026 resources for churches. The Church of England's theme for Lent will be **Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent**. The resources have at their heart the theme of a 'rhythm of life' – habits and patterns which help us grow as disciples of Christ day by day, especially as we prepare to celebrate the great mystery of God's saving love at Easter. [Sign up here.](#)

Enhancing Pastoral Ministry | 28 January; 4, 11, 25 February; and 4, 11 March | 7.30pm - 9.30pm | Earl Stonham Village Hall IP14 5HJ

Enhancing Pastoral Ministry is a six-session course for people who are involved in pastoral care (for example, Readers, Lay Elders, clergy, pastoral visitors) as well as those interested in a deeper understanding. Guest speakers will include: Karen Galloway and members of the Diocesan Safeguarding team; Annabel Turner, member of the Diocesan counselling team, and the Diocesan Growing Younger team. [Book here.](#)

Fieldwork: Celebrating Rural Mission and Ministry in Suffolk | 28 February 2026, 9.30am to 4.00pm | Wingfield Barns, Nr Diss IP21 5RA



Join this Diocesan day conference for church members, PCC members, those in our church schools, lay ministers and clergy from our rural parishes. We will hear from a great keynote speaker, the Revd Jo Neary – Tutor in Rural Ministry and Mission (part-time) at Sarum College, Salisbury, alongside her part-time post as team vicar and pioneer priest in the Beaminster Area Team in Wiltshire, who will encourage us to think about the distinctive identity, calling and potential of the rural church.

There will be time to share our stories of joy and challenge, and be encouraged and inspired. It is being organised by rural ministers with the help of Diocesan staff and is free to attend. [To register please book here.](#)

Flourish | Saturday 2 May 2026, , 9.30am for 10.00am – 3.00pm | The Salvation Army Hall, Stowmarket IP14 1NE

An invitation to all Readers, Licensed Lay Ministers and Lay Elders to join us for our annual study day. The guest speaker this year is the Revd Dr Thomas Sharp from St Augustine's College of Theology. A core part of Thomas's teaching focuses on human flourishing, especially how Christians care for others in times of hardship. The morning session focuses on Pastoral Care in a Broken World and the afternoon session is on the Theology of Safeguarding – what does it mean to care? Reserve your free space now! Click here: [Flourish - Insight CofE Suffolk.](#)

Events and training

Crossroads Retreat hosted by Quiet Waters | Tuesday 9 December 9.30am - Wednesday 10 December 4.00pm | Quiet Waters Christian House, Bungay NR35 1PD

This Retreat is for you when you sense something is changing in your life but are not clear about the way ahead. This two-day retreat is a chance to take time out, free from any pressures or expectations, to listen deeply to yourself, get a fresh perspective and discern the 'good way' forward that is yours and yours alone. All in a secure and peaceful environment where you'll be free to share as much or as little as you'd like. The retreat costs £270.00 and is full-board. To book, please contact the QW office at mail@quietwaters.org.uk or call 01986 893201.

Society of Catholic Priests (SCP) | Thursday 26 February, 11.00am, St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1LS

The St Edmundsbury and Ipswich chapter of the SCP was relaunched three years ago. They meet four times a year, usually at the Cathedral, for a Eucharist, talk, lunch and conversation. The society is inclusive - for ordained men and women - and it celebrates humanity in all God-given diversity with respect to ethnicity, gender and sexuality. It is in the catholic tradition found within the Anglican communion and is centred on the Eucharist. If you are new to the diocese, recently ordained (including deacons), and feel this could be a spiritual home and place of encouragement and support for you, then come along. The next meeting lead speaker will be the Revd Canon Stuart Batten on Desert Spirituality. For more information please contact Mother Ali: teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com

Church Community Services and Events

'Christmas through the Keyhole' | Saturday 6 December, 30 minute tours from 1.00-3.30pm | St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1RT

Offering an interactive Christmas trail telling the Christmas story starting in the present day, then visiting Mary's home, the shepherds' field, the Magis' observatory, Joseph's workshop, and ending up in the Bethlehem stable. At each zone you will be invited to use all your senses to find out more about the characters in the story and how each one became involved in the amazing story. This is a great opportunity to experience the Christmas story. With an opportunity to do some Christmas crafts and have tea and cake. No booking required. For more information jennifer.aston@btinternet.com

Local Houses of Prayer Training Day | All Saints' Church, Newmarket | Saturday 6 December, 10.00am to 4.00pm.

This is a movement of Christians from many different churches who have the desire to pray specifically for their own town and villages, the streets where they live, and those who live and work around them. They are tiny prayer groups, typically starting off with 2-3 people, which adopt a small geographical area. This training day offers an opportunity to learn more about the underlying biblical principles, to hear stories of what God has done and is doing in different places, and find out what the next steps might be for us here in our own local area. The invitation is to all members of Churches Together in Newmarket

and the surrounding area, and any others who might be interested. For more information visit the website here: localhousesofprayer.org/events

Christmas Tree Festival | Ipswich Minster on until Sunday 7 December

Over the past 14 years, the Christmas Tree Festival inside Ipswich Minster has marked for many the beginning of the Christmas period, and this year it's back bigger than ever! The last day of the Festival will coincide with a BBC Radio Suffolk carol service on Sunday.

The evening will include performances from the Ipswich Minster choir, folk duo Kyson Point and audience carols, along with readings from BBC Radio Suffolk presenters and the Minster community. Find out more [here](#).

Christmas Fayre | Saturday 13 December | Great Blakenham Parish Room | 11.00am to 2.00pm

Come along for craft stalls, Christmas gifts, refreshments and an opportunity to visit Father Christmas in his grotto in the church.

Advent Event for Bury St Edmunds | Sunday 14 December, 7.00pm | St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1RT

St Edmundsbury Cathedral's InHarmony project is working with Cantus Firmus Trust and Churches Together in Bury St Edmunds and District to present an Advent event for the town, entitled 'Sharers in the Promise'. The presentation uses music and drama to reflect on the coming of Jesus Christ – a promise of hope and salvation in which all can share. Admission is by free ticket, available at cantusfirmus.org.uk There will be a collection to help cover costs.

Great Blakenham Village Carol Singing | Friday 19 December, 6.30pm | St Mary's Church, Great Blakenham

Meet at the church to walk along the local area and take part in family carol singing. Finish at Tesco's for some mince pies! Everyone welcome - make sure to wrap up warm and bring a torch.

Remembering Loved Ones at Christmas | St Mary's Church, Great Blakenham | Saturday 20 December, 3.30pm to 5.00pm

Join this gentle candlelight service to pause, reflect and remember loved ones during the festive season. Share hymns, music, prayer and the lighting of candles.

A Seasonal Celebration of Song | Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford CO10 9DL | Saturday 20 December, 5.00pm

Come along and join a seasonal celebration of song, with HappySounds Community Choir and special guests Sudbury Sings and The VIPs. Tickets cost £10 in aid of Compassion/Macmillan, contact info@happysounds.co.uk

Online Parish Returns System (OPRS): This is open to parishes wanting to input attendance figures on the number of people attending their church in person for services and other acts of worship during the first four weeks in October. This includes the number of people attending on Sundays and during the week (Monday to Saturday). The OPRS can be accessed via following link <https://parishreturns.churchofengland.org>. If you need help creating an account for the Online Parish Returns System, please send an email to statistics@cofesuffolk.org and we will be happy to help you.

Dwelling in the Word: a new passage has been selected from those submitted, and Bishop Joanne has chosen Psalm 33 for use from January 2025. [Please find your copy here.](#)

Vacancies

[Café Manager](#) | Holy Trinity Church, Ipswich | Closing date: 5 December
[Organist/Pianist and Choir Leader](#) | St Mary's East Bergholt, Constable Country Benefice | Closing date: 7 December
[Team Vicar & Associate Priest](#) | Blyth Valley Team Ministry | Closing date: 11 February
[Team Vicar](#) | [Sole Bay Team](#) | Closing date: TBC
[Team Vicar](#) | Forest Heath Team Ministry (House for Duty - Sunday + 2 days) | Closing date: TBC
[Non-Executive Safeguarding Chapter Member](#) | St Edmundsbury Cathedral
[Cathedral Volunteers](#) | St Edmundsbury Cathedral
[Risk, Audit and Review Committee Member](#) | St Edmundsbury Cathedral
[Associate Chaplain](#) | Sizewell C
[Part-time Youth Worker](#) | All Saints' Church, Ipswich

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Watch our stories from around Suffolk





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