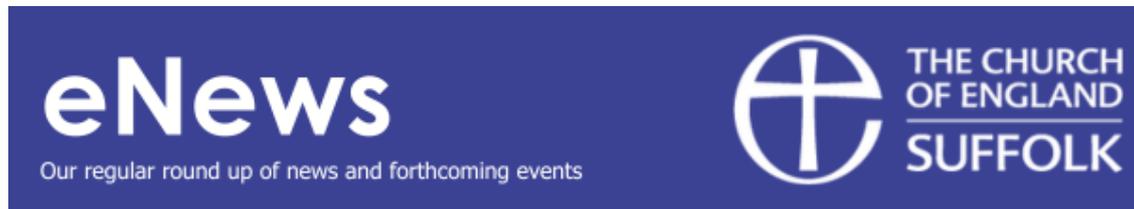


Thursday 5 February 2026



'Jesus saved me – and the church gave me a family and purpose'



Archdeacon Samantha Brazier-Gibbs started her new position in Ipswich last year and has explained how her difficult experiences in childhood led her to joining the clergy – and how fears of 'losing her flock' were relieved on arrival in Suffolk's county town.

"I've been a parish priest for more than 20 years and was a bit worried that with becoming an archdeacon I wouldn't have a flock to love and encourage," she said. "But actually one of the great privileges is that the ministers of the Archdeaconry and the people of Ipswich became my flock. I also get the privilege of sitting at top-table discussions about vision, mission, strategy and about how the church in this diocese is shaped, what we do to lift Jesus high and how we love the people who are charged to our care. I get to love, serve, encourage and give them everything a vicar would give a congregation."

Samantha was born and raised in North West London but has lived in Essex for the past 20 years. She described her early childhood as made up of 'chaos and sport'. When she was 13 her father passed away, just six months after being diagnosed with cancer. As a teenager Samantha met a Christian called Anne, who invited her to a church youth group and she became, what she calls, a 'covert, undercover Christian'.

Soon after, she decided to follow Christ and joined St Michael's Church in Harrow after being invited along by a friend. *"God saved me – and the church gave me a family and purpose. It sounds cliché but it's true."*

"Suffolk has always had a place in my heart," she said. "We used to go on holiday when I was young to Kessingland every year, so I know the Suffolk coast quite well. I have always loved Suffolk, there's something about the big skies, the coast and the countryside here." Samantha said she's had a very warm welcome since joining the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, and is looking forward to what she can achieve in the role. Samantha said it was an exciting time for the Church of England in Suffolk, and longs to help bring people together across the county's church communities.

Read the full story on [our website here](#).

Living Water Church Charity Shop Relaunch

A long-running church-led charity shop in Ipswich is relaunching with a new management team – and is branching out into online sales.



Living Water, in Dickens Road, Ipswich, has been serving the community for almost 30 years, selling a range of donated bric-a-brac, clothes, toys, jewellery and books while offering a cafe area for a quiet sit down and a chat.

Its previous manager Mandy Stone is stepping down after 22 years, making way for three, part-time co-managers – Caroline Relton, Kevin Clarke and Amy Lotay – to take the helm.

The Revd Lawrence Carey, Associate Priest for Triangle Church, which operates Living Water as a not-for-profit, said: *"Living Water isn't just a shop, it's a community hub and our day-to-day presence in our community. Our customers say it's a place of peace, somewhere where they can come in, sit down and get a cup of something nice and where they will always receive a warm welcome."*

Read the full story [on our website here](#).

Together we pray: We are delighted that Tim Holder, Director of Engagement is leading 'Together we Pray' from Monday 9 February. Tune in at 8.30am on the [Bishop's Facebook page](#) to watch live or visit the page to watch again later in the day.

Love your Yew week: The environmental charity Caring for God's Acre, which focusses on biodiversity in burial grounds, is working in collaboration with the Ancient Yew Group on the second Love Your Yew Week, running from 9 – 15 February 2026.

In Love Your Yew Week it is suggested for those churchyards lucky enough to contain an ancient or veteran yew, that February is a good time of year to carry out any work on yew trees, before birds are nesting and hopefully a time of year that is not too busy with other tasks. One task is to **clear beneath the canopy**, removing all objects, including at least a metre beyond the canopy. Those looking after yew trees can record their work and will be sent a certificate which celebrates these remarkable trees, and which can be displayed to let the public know there is a special tree present. Visit this [website](#) to take part. Registration is open now!



Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent: The Church of England's theme for Lent 2026 is Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent. This year's 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. Resources

include:

- A 40-day challenge for families and children - exploring the life-giving habit of generosity produced in partnership with [40acts \(brought to you by Stewardship\)](#)
- Booklets for adults, available from [Church House Publishing](#).
- The [Everyday Faith app](#) will carry reflections for adults every Monday to Saturday throughout Lent.

- More resources are listed on the Church of England website here: [Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent](#)

Online Lent Course: Framing the Future, Wednesdays during Lent at 7.00pm

Each week, beginning on 25 February, this year's Lent course at St Edmundsbury Cathedral will explore 'visions of a future church', responding to a lecture in the Cathedral given by Abbott Christopher Jamison on Shrove Tuesday titled 'Framing the Future. Find out more about our speakers, and register [here](#).

Generosity and Giving at Easter: The Diocesan Parish Resources Team have contactless giving devices available for loan allowing you to 'try before you buy'. Or you could borrow a device for a specific event you have planned. Join this webinar 'Digital Giving at Lent and Easter' on Tuesday 17 February at 12.00pm for a dive into Digital Giving and how it can help your church, whether it's online donations or contactless and in-person.

Mission and Ministry Events

PCC Workshop on Planning for Growth – what, why, who, how? Thursday 12 February, 7.30-8.30pm | Online



Come and join this TEAMS webinar, led by Revd Katie de Bourcier, Diocesan Mission Enabler to find out more about Planning for Growth in benefices and deaneries. Planning for Growth is one of the ways in which we seek to fulfil our vision to be a diocese that is Growing in God. Plans for Growth encourage us to work prayerfully, collaboratively, and creatively as we seek to share God's love in word and action. At this webinar, we will introduce the revised Plan for Growth templates and resources, talk about why Planning for Growth matters and how a Plan for Growth can be developed, and

explain the help and support on offer from the Mission and Ministry Team. There will be a chance to ask your questions too. To book, please email mission@cofesuffolk.org.

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](#).

Interested in Reader Ministry? Saturday 21 March, 10.00am to 12.00pm | Best Western Brome Grange Hotel, Norwich Road, Nr Eye, IP23 8AP

Come along to our informal Coffee Morning - an opportunity to find out more about Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers). Led by Diocesan staff and those currently serving as and training to be Readers. Even better, there will be cake! Please email [Lauren Moore](mailto:Lauren.Moore) to express your interest, ask any further questions and to enable us to arrange catering.

Lark Rise Retreats

'The Pilgrim's Progress - exploring the themes of John Bunyan's novel' a study day led by Jane Jennison on Saturday 28 March at St Nicholas Church, The Ferry, Felixstowe

'The resurrection appearances of Jesus', a quiet day led by the Revd Penny Brinkley on Saturday 11 April at St Nicholas Church, The Ferry, Felixstowe

'Faith on the edge - Jesus heals at the margins', a retreat day based on Luke 8.40 to 56, led by the Revd Helen Rengert on Saturday 9 May at St Edmunds Church, Langer Rd, Felixstowe

Days run from 10.00am – 4.00pm and cost £27/person including refreshments and lunch. A bursary fund is available. More details and bookings are on www.larkriseretreats.org or call Catherine Bond & Jane Pearse on 01394 284213.

In the beginning was the story. A different approach to the New Testament |

Starts Wednesday 29 April 2026 for seven weeks at Earl Stonham Village Hall
Led by the Revd Canon John Parr, Approaching the New Testament takes a story-shaped approach to the heart of Christian faith. This course looks at the beginnings of what became Christianity, in the writings of the New Testament, and explores their narrative features. The New Testament writers passed on the gospel of Jesus Christ not as a collection of facts or doctrines, but as a series of stories that shaped people's lives. What can we learn from them about the challenges we face in doing the same in our day?
[Please book here.](#)

The Gathering | Friday 24 April 6.00pm - Sunday 26 April 2.00pm | Vauxhall Farm, Great Wenham CO7 6QQ



The Gathering is a residential weekend organised in partnership with Ipswich CYM and youth leaders from across Ipswich. The excellent Tim Alford will be joining for the Friday night who will do a great job in delivering a Gospel talk. The cost for this weekend is £110 per young person. Bookings are managed by CYM Ipswich using the online *Ticket Taylor* system. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to email [Jamie Swinerd](mailto:Jamie.Swinerd). To find out more and book please visit our website [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](#).

Youthscape Essentials

Youthscape Essentials is all-round training for every youth leader. This course is free and includes an extensive training manual which will be given to you before the first session. We are delighted that there are two learning streams available, online and in person.

Face to Face: 28 March, 9 May, 6 June with an online top-up session organised with delegates | venue will depend on the location of the delegates. To sign up to the face-to-face stream please click [here](#) and use course code "2201492"

Online by TEAMS: (Weds 7.00pm - 9.00pm): 16 September, 7 October, 11 November, 9 December, 13 January 2027, 10 February 2027, 10 March 2027, 14 April 2027, 12 May 2027 and 9 June 2027. To sign up to the online stream, please click [here](#) and use course code "2201540"

If you are interested in Youthscape Essentials but cannot make some/any of the above dates, then please do email [Jamie Swinerd](#), Diocesan Youth & Young Adults Enabler.

Church Community Services and Events

United in Solace and Grace | Saturday 7 February, 11.00am | St Edmundsbury Cathedral including an exhibition by local artists and survivors organisations and Sunday 8 February, 4.00pm | All Saints Holbrook
'United in Solace and Grace' is a series of reflective church services which are designed to reach out to survivors of abuse of all kinds, families, supporters and professionals. You are invited to join the above services to mark 'It's Not OK Week'. For more information about United in Solace and Grace please visit www.solaceandgrace.co.uk or email the Revd [Jenny Seggar](#).

Be a Chorister Day | Ipswich Minster | Thursday 12 February from 4.45pm
Ipswich Minster is recruiting girls and boys, aged 7 and above, to join their outstanding choir. No previous experience required. For more information visit www.ipswichminster.org.

Concert | Saturday 14 February, 4.00pm | St Margaret's Church, Soane Street, Ipswich, IP4 2BT
A late afternoon concert featuring members of Trianon Symphony Orchestra, Ipswich Choral Society and the Ipswich Gilbert and Sullivan Society. Warm welcome and warm drinks. Retiring donations. Parking available in St Margaret's School car park.

Open Table Eucharist | Saturday 14 February, 5.00pm | St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1LS
Join us for our Open Table Eucharist. This service is for LGBTQIA+ people, their friends, families and allies. We welcome those of any faith or background, every gender identity

and sexual orientation. All are welcome, but please respect that this service is created to be a safe, sacred space for those who need it.

Strictly St Mary's | Saturday 14 February, 7.30pm - 11.00pm | St Mary's Stoke, Ipswich IP2 8BX

Come along to an evening of ballroom and latin dancing at St Mary's Church, with a raffle also available on the night! Bring your own refreshments. Tickets cost just £5 and [are available here.](#)

Also on this day at St Peter's Church Stoke Park, why not come along and enjoy a table top sale from 3.00pm to 5.00pm - pick up a bargain and enjoy some refreshments too.

Jubilate Choir Choral Evening Song, All Saints Church, Easton IP13 0EE. What3Words: finer.worth.cracking | Sunday 15 February, 6.00pm

Orebeck Benefice is delighted to invite you to join the Jubilate Choir when they will sing Choral Evensong according to the order of the Book of Common Prayer. Jubilate consists of between 12 and 16 experienced singers including a cantor. It makes no charge for its services and exists to promote and preserve the service of Choral Evensong and its inclusion in traditional parish worship. You will be very welcome to join this moving traditional service.

Teach Rex | Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 February 10.30am & 2.00pm | St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1LS

Join us this half term for everything dinosaur! 🦖 Come along and experience an audience with a T-Rex! Tickets on [sale here.](#)

Benedict Lecture with Abbot Christopher Jamison | Tuesday 17 February 6.30pm | St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1LS

In our inaugural Benedict lecture, Abbot Christopher Jamison explores how we might frame the future. Pessimism is the frame of the future for many people in Britain today. Why? What frame does Christian faith generate? Tickets cost £5 and [are available here.](#)

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 meet four times a year 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. Join the next meeting by the Revd Canon Stuart Batten on Desert Spirituality. For more information please email [Mother Ali.](#)

Psalmscape | Saturday 28 February 2026, 11.00am to 4.30pm, All Hallows Church, Ipswich IP3 0EN

Join the Cantus Firmus Choir for a day to explore the Psalms through music. You will sing a variety of music inspired by the Psalms, in a broad range of musical styles. There will be reflections on the Psalms, led by Revd Emma Steadman. The day will end with a short act of worship, incorporating some of the music learned during the day. The event is suitable for all who enjoy choral singing. Details and booking at [cantusfirmus.org.uk](#)

Suffolk witch trials 'pop up' exhibition | February | St Mary's Church,
Tattingstone, Ipswich, IP9 2NA

This touring exhibition (in association with Babergh District Council and Suffolk Archives) uncovers the lives of those accused during the witch trials, giving voice to the people whose stories are often forgotten.

Grandparent Day | Saturday 14 March, 10.30am - 2.30pm | Thomas Clarkson Centre
Hospital Rd Bury St Edmunds IP33 3JT

What does it take to be a Grandparent of Faith? Come to be affirmed, supported and encouraged. The day will start with worship, and will include key speakers and workshops. Free tickets are [available here](#).

Considering ordination in the Church of England? | Thursday 26 March, 1.00pm or
7.30pm, Zoom

Oak Hill College is running a one-hour online event designed to help you explore whether God may be calling you to ordained ministry in the Church of England. Join on Zoom for an hour of biblical reflection, honest insight and practical guidance. You'll hear from experienced church leaders who have each walked this path and now serve in significant roles within the Church as well as from some current ordinands. For more info and to sign up click [here](#).

Cursillo Retreat | Friday 17 April 10.00am Saturday 18 April 4.00pm, at Sizewell
Hall IP16 4TX

Join this retreat with the theme 'Fishers of men', to look at how God has called us to serve him.

Cost £145.00 per person. For more details and to book before 7 March please email bev.frost@ntlworld.com.

Icon Workshop with Sr Annette Lawrence DMJ | September 7 -11 2026 | St Mary
and St Botolph Church Whitton, Ipswich IP1 6LT

A rare opportunity to attend a non residential icon workshop for just £250. Residential workshops cost between £800 and £1000 plus. Sr Annette is an extremely experienced and talented teacher and guide with many years of experience running these workshops. No experience or artistic ability needed - suitable for complete novice or experienced iconographers! The blessing of your own icon to take away at the end of the week. You will need to be able to attend fully every day. Numbers are limited to 12 maximum so early booking advised. For more information and a booking form email The Revd Mary Sokanovic Rector Whitton with Thurleston and Akenham or call 07824323073

Summer Biblical Study in Cambridge | Westminster College, Cambridge

Each week's conference may be of interest to Clergy, and Readers and other lay members, who are serving parishes; especially those in training. Each week offers two five-hour courses, and their three related 'Readings' in a Biblical language, which explore exegetical and translation issues. Participants can be resident or non resident at the conference. There are also Bursaries available to help towards costs. Further information can be found on the VTBS website www.vtbs.org.uk.

Energy Footprint Tool launched on 12 January 2026: The Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) is now open for churches to enter energy use from 2025. Recording your energy use is an unseen but essential act of caring for people and the planet. Complete your EFT on the Parish Returns Portal [here](#). If you require log-in details or any other assistance with the online portal, please email statistics@cofesuffolk.org If you need help with the EFT please email [James Rolls](#), our Net Zero Carbon Officer.

Statistics for Mission: Thank you to all parishes who have completed their Statistics for Mission forms - the data you provide helps to offer insights into trends such as attendance and electoral roll. The National Church deadline is 13 March 2026. Returns should be submitted via the Online Parish Returns System, which can be accessed here: [Parish Returns Online](#) If you require log-in details or any other assistance with the online portal, please email statistics@cofesuffolk.org Further information regarding Parish returns, including videos on how to submit, can be found here: [Stats for Mission - Insight CofE Suffolk](#).

Marriage Preparation Grants: Do you need financial support for your parish, benefice or deanery marriage preparation events? You can now apply to the Mothers' Union for a grant to cover the costs of aspects such as printing, refreshments or room hire. For further information and a grant application form please contact enquiry@musuffolk.org.uk

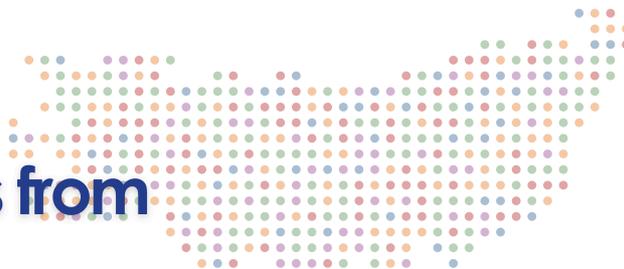
Vacancies

[Diocesan Director of Education](#) | Diocesan Office | Closing date: 9 February
[Team Vicar & Associate Priest](#) | Blyth Valley Team Ministry | Closing date: 11 February
[HR Administration Assistant](#) | Closing date: 12 February
[Church Administrator](#) | Christ Church Felixstowe | Closing date: 20 February
[Rector](#) | North Bosmere Benefice | Closing date: 23 February
[Youth Minister](#) | St John's Woodbridge | Closing date: 27 February
[Lightwave Pioneer Leader](#) | Bridge Communities, Suffolk
[Team Vicar](#) | Sole Bay Team
[Team Vicar](#) | Forest Heath Team Ministry
[Non-Executive Safeguarding Chapter Member](#) | [Cathedral Volunteers](#) | [Risk, Audit and Review Committee Member](#) | St Edmundsbury Cathedral
[Associate Chaplain](#) | Sizewell C
Royal Naval Chaplaincy | email the Chaplain Recruiter, the Revd [Alastair Blaine](#) RN.
[Children's and Families Minister](#) | Parish of Whitton

Click here to print and share with others



Watch our stories from around Suffolk



Copyright © 2026 Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, All rights reserved.

This email is generated from the Communications Office at the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Our mailing address is:

Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, 4 Cutler Street, Ipswich, Suffolk, England IP1 1UQ

[Add us to your address book](#)

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
