

Saxmundham Deanery



Sharing the Gospel, Serving the Community, Strengthening our Spirituality



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- Finding new ways of connecting with the community
- Maximising the use of our church buildings
- Strengthening the spiritual life of the church members and new believers

Anticipated outcomes

- Active, confident, enthusiastic local congregations articulate in the expression of their faith
- Increased numbers within worshipping communities
- Increase number of lay leaders
- Increase in the numbers within prayer and study groups
- More candidates coming forward for baptism, confirmation and vocational training
- Increased use of our church buildings both for worship and for community purposes

- Logo was designed by Sedge Design & Print.

Setting the scene.

The Setting

The Deanery covers nearly 17 sq. miles of outstanding natural beauty and a resident population of approaching 20000 people. Its 22 parishes are organised into 3 town benefices and 3 rural benefices at the moment and serve a population of nearly 20,000 people. The town benefices of Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham serve approximately 2500, 6000 and nearly 5000 people respectively while the rural benefices of Yoxmere, Alde River and Whinlands serve approx 3000, 2000 and 2000 respectively. There have been a total of 7 stipendiary clergy, 4 self supporting clergy, 4 Readers and 37 elders. There are not enough stipendiary clergy to fill posts nor enough income to pay for present numbers of posts, nationally. Following the retirement of 4 incumbents within 11 months, our Deanery needs to plan for a reduction in the number of its stipendiary clergy posts from 7 to 5. At the moment there are 4 self supporting priests and 4 Readers who play an essential part in the ministry of the Church, especially in maintaining the desired frequency of regular worship and sharing the load of occasional offices. One Reader is leaving the area and another is emeritus so not be available indefinitely.

The Community Context.

As the logo implies the Deanery is an area of lovely farm land and coastal scenery and it attracts many visitors each year, some of whom have second homes in the area and form an important part of the community. Within the Deanery is the Sizewell Power Station which is a significant employer and it is anticipated that another reactor will be constructed within the next few years, making an impact on the community both in terms of work opportunities and increased commercial activity and services. The Deanery also has both the Snape Maltings and the RSPB Reserve at Minsmere within its boundaries, attracting large numbers of day visitors.

The age profile of the Deanery is such the under 18 year olds make up 18% of the population, the 19 – 60 year old make up 46% and the over 60's make up 36%. There are 20 schools including playgroups in the Deanery and there are 5 Nursing Homes, 3 Medical Practices and the Aldeburgh Community Hospital. The 2011 Census figures show that 22% of the population describe their health as poor. There is some social deprivation and there is now a Food Bank operating in the deanery.

The Church Context

The 22 ecclesiastical communities have regular services using Common Worship and/or BCP. The level of attendance in the rural parishes is generally good but the age profile is predominantly in the over 60's group. There are various types of outreach activities, examples of which include Toddler Groups, Messy Church, Holiday Clubs, Open the Book , Coffee and Doughnuts ,Tea and Toast, Soup and Pud, Community Drop In and a Youth Club.

Festival attendances make a significant contribution to finances and the churches are used on a regular basis for Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.

The total numbers on the Electoral Roll for the Deanery stand at 1015 at present, around 4% of the population in the town parishes and around 10% of the population in the rural parishes. There is an RC church in Aldeburgh and other denominations are present across the Deanery, notably URC, Methodist and Baptist, plus Quakers and Brethren.

Why a deanery?

- The purpose of Deaneries is to
- Bring together parishes and benefices for mutual support
- Provide an effective unit through which the Bishop and Archdeacon can exercise administration and management.
- Provide a conduit for two way communication between the diocese and parishes via the benefices
- Bring together parishes for special services and occasions

The Deanery Plan should help to bring both focus and clarity to the strategic processes of the Diocese and reflect the key points of mission as defined by the Diocese and the wider Church:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures in society
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Challenges for the Future

Sharing the Gospel. (To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom)

“I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” Romans 1:16

There are several challenges facing the Deanery in its desire to undertake the Church’s primary role of sharing the gospel.

1. Increasing population with a decreasing number of fulltime stipendiary clergy
2. The need to find an effective way of reaching young people especially in the rural parishes.
3. Having an effective outreach programme that will encompass the many visitors to our lovely county and coastal area.

According to the 2011 Census the total population in the Deanery was 19,433. It is known that these figures are increasing and will expand very significantly with the planned expansion of Sizewell C. The Deanery needs to identify and use the special gifts required in its key areas of witness when looking to appoint new stipendiary clergy and it needs to grow new, confident, witness among the laity. The key areas of witness that have been identified are:

- Reaching children and young people through work in schools and youth groups
- Ministering and witnessing to the many visitors that come into the Deanery which encompasses Minsmere and the National Trust and the numerous caravan and camping sites.
- Ministering and witnessing to the increasing numbers of newcomers in the developing areas of population in Saxmundham, Leiston and the villages.
- Developing the ministry to people involved with the Arts, especially music, (Aldeburgh and Snape Maltings), painting and creative writing.
- Maintaining and expanding the rural worshipping communities.

Serving the Community (To respond to human need by loving service)

“We who are strong in the faith ought to help the weak to carry their burdens” Romans 15.v1

It is important for there to be a strong and active Christian focus in each of our parish communities so that we can respond to the residents and visitors need for loving service as the opportunity arises. This is especially true in view of the fact that 36% of the population is over 60 years old and 22% describe their health as poor. The challenges will include:

- Provision of pastoral visits and distribution of Holy Communion to the sick and house-bound.
- Encouraging a strong neighbourly culture in both the rural and the town parishes.
- Serving the increasing number facing extreme financial pressures, some of which are being helped by the recently created Food Bank within the Deanery.

Strengthening our spirituality. (To teach, baptise and nurture new (and older) believers)

“Grow in the grace and knowledge and of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ” 2 Peter 3 v.18

Hand in hand with the command to share the gospel is the command to grow in grace and the knowledge and love of our Lord. We are urged time and time again by St Paul particularly “to know the mind of God”.

The challenge in these more difficult times for the Church in our country is not to dwell on our weaknesses in terms of attendance, decreasing numbers of clergy, stretched finances and responsibility of maintaining all our church buildings and communities but to look forward.

Looking to the areas of the world where the church is vibrant then they are strong, financially sound communities seeing their numbers increase consistently. Their vibrancy is based on strong discipleship and a spirituality which is based on regular worship, group bible study and prayer.

We need to build on

- The nurturing of members' gifts for service
- Our response to God's generosity in terms of giving in both service and financial stewardship
- Reaching and inspiring young people
- Training the laity
- Pioneering new outreach activities

Meeting the challenges.

These have been identified as

1. Recruiting, training new and existing Readers, Elders and lay leaders.

We will need far more lay involvement in the work of the local churches against a background of decreasing stipendiary clergy numbers.

Action.

- To recruit a new incumbent into the Deanery who will have a responsibility for lay training

2. Encouraging collaboration within the Deanery

Action.

- Circulating a prayer card among the churches ,
- Organising special joint services and activities
- Sharing personnel and other resources to help with worship and pastoral work.

3. Strengthening the spiritual life of the church members and nurturing new believers.

Action.

- Arranging special Deanery meetings,
- Sharing Alpha, Emmaus, York Course group sessions and other Bible Study meetings and resources.

4. Planning the wise use of the special gifts of the clergy (both stipendiary and self supporting) and laity

Action. Four areas have been identified that will be covered by new appointments, three of which will be new recruits to the team.

- Reaching and inspiring young people

- Training the laity
- Pioneering new outreach activities
- Maintaining the ministry to visitors and the outreach to the music and cultural groups.

5. Finding new ways of reaching the community

Action.

- Development of a Deanery website and good marketing materials
- Pioneering new forms of informal contact such as the Tea and Toast and Soup and Pud initiatives already in existence.

6. Maximising the use of the church buildings.

Action.

- Follow through some of the suggestions by the Local Giving Advisers to increase the number of tourist visitors by making the individual churches places of special interest
- Open up the churches for Art Exhibitions, concerts and special occasions.

Anticipated outcomes.

- Active, confident, enthusiastic local congregations articulate in the expression of their faith
- Increase in the members of worshipping communities
- Increase in number of readers, elders and lay leaders
- Increase in the number of prayer and study groups
- More candidates coming forward for baptism, confirmation and vocational training
- Increased use of our church buildings

These outcomes will be monitored 6 monthly by informal reports back at the Deanery Synod meetings.

We are aware that we have not formally addressed the final 2 points on Mission as set out above but we know that there are individual churches that do have various initiatives that address them such as Green policies and Fair Trade support.