

WELCOME TO OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY



If this is your first newsletter, **welcome!** If you have any questions about the church family, the Christian faith, or about our children's work, please do not hesitate to get in touch. This notice sheet covers the next two weeks and combines:

- Notices
- The church diary (including livestream & Zoom joining instructions)
- Prayers and readings for the morning services on Sunday 28th Dec 2025 & 4th Jan 2026
- Wishing one and all a Healthy & Happy New Year

Congregation numbers growing in Suffolk

Church of England Churches in Suffolk have seen a rise in congregation numbers – surpassing the overall national increase in church attendance this year.

Overall the attendance growth for 2023/2024 for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich reveal adult average weekly attendance rose by 6% on last year, well above the national rise of 1.8%. Average church attendance for children also saw a surge, with a rise of 10% in Suffolk compared to the national increase of 0.4%.

These figures show the growth throughout the whole diocese and include the impact from growth projects in our church communities.

Gary Peverley, Diocesan Secretary said: *"We are pleased to see church attendance is growing across Suffolk, particularly as we look forward to welcoming people into our churches over Christmas. The latest reported attendance figures highlight an encouraging trend in worship participation, particularly among children, within the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich compared to national averages. I am delighted by this news as it indicates that our commitment to our Growing In God vision is working."*

The diocese received Strategic Development Funding over seven years (2019 – 2025) from the national Church of England for major growth projects – Inspiring Ipswich and Growing in God in the Countryside.

Inspiring Ipswich, which was supported by £2.7 million, exceeded its ambitious outcomes – making 36,376 new contacts with those outside the Church, including top-up shops, school assembly and prayer spaces, messy churches and Christmas services. The size of the total worshipping community within Ipswich has increased by 20% between 2019 and 2024, showing the impact the project has had on the town's church numbers.

The Growing in God in the Countryside project was supported by £2.3 million and aimed to grow congregations in more rural areas, especially through the small groups of the Lightwave Community. As of 2025, 41 of these small groups exist, with 19% of benefices within the diocese now having a small ecclesial group engaging in outreach.

Diary

Wed 24 th	3.00pm	Crib Service at Holy Trinity
	6.00pm	Shimpling Carol Service
	10.45pm	Midnight Mass at Holy Trinity
Thurs 25 th	10.30am	Christmas Day Communion at Holy Trinity *
Sun 28 th	10.30am	Communion at Holy Trinity *
Wed 31 st	1.30pm	Wedding at Alpheton Greg & Abigail
Sun 4 th Jan 2026	9.00am	Communion at Alpheton
	10.30am	Communion at Holy Trinity *
	4.00pm	Informal Prayer with refreshments at Lawshall
Mon 5 th	7.30pm	Lawshall Home Group
Tues 6 th	9.00am	Morning Prayer #
Thurs 8 th	7.30pm	Choir Practice
Sun 11 th	10.30am	Communion at Holy Trinity *
	4.00pm	Plough Sunday Celebration at Bury St Edmunds Cathedral

*** Livestream Joining Instructions**

- Google the five words “Holy Trinity Long Melford Facebook” or [click here](#) to open the church’s Facebook page (scroll down a bit to see the feed).
- Please note that you do not need a Facebook account yourself in order to watch the livestream.

Morning Prayer Zoom Meeting ID: 816 5338 9796, Passcode: 289895, or click [here](#).

Readings for the 28th December 2025 – Christmas 1**Collect (prayer for the day)**

Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Reading**1 Corinthians 1:26-29**

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Old Testament Reading**Jeremiah 31:15-17**

This is what the Lord says:

‘A voice is heard in Ramah,
mourning and great weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.’

¹⁶ This is what the Lord says: ‘Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,’ declares the Lord. ‘They will return from the land of the enemy.’

¹⁷ So there is hope for your descendants,’ declares the Lord. ‘Your children will return to their own land.’

Gospel Reading**Matthew 2:13-18**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’ ¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’ ¹⁶ When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ ‘A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to You O Christ

Post Communion Prayer

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home: help your Church to live as one family, united in love and obedience, and bring us all at last to our home in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Readings for the 4th January 2026 – Epiphany**Collect (prayer for the day)**

Creator of the heavens, who led the Magi by a star to worship the Christ-child: guide and sustain us, that we may find our journey's end in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

First Reading**Isaiah 60:1-6**

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

² See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

³ Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴ 'Lift up your eyes and look about you: all assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip.

⁵ Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come.

⁶ Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Old Testament Reading**Ephesians 3:1-12**

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles –

² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Gospel Reading**Matthew 2:1-12**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to You O Christ

(Bible readings courtesy of Bible Gateway New International Version - UK (NIVUK))

Post Communion Prayer

Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek: may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light discern the glory of your presence in your Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Suggestions for prayer include:

- We pray for all attending our various services and events over the Christmas period, and spare a particular thought for any who, for whatever reason, are dreading the Christmas break.
- We pray for world leaders that they would remain humble, seek peace, and be open to the Spirit of God.
- We remember before God those who have recently died including Carol Barraclough & Elizabeth Bird, and we pray for those friends & family who mourn
- We pray for those in need of God's presence or his healing touch including Barbara Brady, Anne Bush, David Bremer, Elizabeth Clarke, Phillip Cole, Christopher Freeman, Robert Hawkins, William Hawkins, Judith Mills, and Mary Tuffen.