Celebrating and Welcoming Churchwardens

During July, special church services have been held to welcome in new Churchwardens into the Diocese of Norwich, alongside Churchwardens who have served for many years.

A Churchwarden is an officer of the bishop and they swear an oath to share responsibility in caring for their parish church along with their clergy. They are all volunteers and play a key role in the day to day running of an Anglican church.

Fakenham parish church hosted the Admission of Churchwardens in the Archdeaconry of Lynn, led by the Archdeacon of Lynn, the Venerable Catherine Dobson. Over 140 representatives from churches across the Diocese came to swear their oaths as they were admitted to this ancient office.

To find out more about this role within the Diocese of Norwich, go to [www.dioceseofnorwich.org](https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org)

Church of England school in Long Stratton ends term with remarkable Ofsted turn around

A Norfolk junior school run by St Benet’s Multi Academy Trust – part of the Diocese of Norwich’s education arm – has been labelled Outstanding in its latest Ofsted report, after its previous inspection had resulted in Requires Improvement status.

Following its latest visit to St Mary’s Church of England Junior Academy in Long Stratton, the education inspectorate’s findings included that “pupils love coming to this school” and that the school provides a “calm, quiet environment where pupils are happy and exceptionally well cared for”.

This represents marked improvements across all areas of the school’s operations according to Ofsted, compared to its prior 2023 report.

Laura Richardson has been headteacher at St Mary’s since January 2024, during which time she has assembled a new leadership team and worked closely with Mark Carlyle, Improvement Director for St Benet’s Multi Academy Trust.

Alongside a commitment to “deliberate, intentional decision making” in all aspects of school strategy, Laura explains that the Christian values of love and forgiveness have also played a key role in altering the school’s culture:

*“I came into a school that was not liked by the community. Nobody had anything nice to say about it. We’ve worked so hard at building those relationships with our families, with our community, to a place now where everyone feels supported.*

*“We tell the children that they are loved and that we will forgive them when they make mistakes.*

*“Families come in here and we will have conversations around issues such as housing, financial hardship, domestic violence, those kind of things. And that was really evident in our Ofsted report – the inspectors were blown away by the report that came back from the parents because they obviously couldn’t believe the contrast from the last findings in 2023.”*

St Mary’s had been a standalone academy until 2021, when it joined St Benet’s group. It currently has 159 children attending across four year groups, with 31% of pupils having SEND requirements.

[Junior academy in St Benet's group ends term with remarkable Ofsted turnaround - Diocese of Norwich](https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/junior-academy-in-st-benets-group-ends-term-with-remarkable-ofsted-turnaround/)

Bishop to arrive by wherry for St Benet’s service this Sunday 27 July

Once a year the riverside ruins of isolated St Benet’s Abbey are filled with music and prayer as the Bishop of Norwich, who is also Abbot of St Benet’s, arrives by wherry for the annual open-air service.

All are welcome to join this year’s St Benet’s service on Sunday July 27.

Atmospheric St Benet’s stands in reed-fringed water-meadows beside the River Bure. Bishop Graham will travel by wherry from Ranworth to be met by the modern-day heirs of the monks who lived, worked and worshipped here for centuries.

This is the only monastery in England not closed by Henry VIII. Instead it was given to the Bishop of Norwich, and the people who gather here for the annual summer service – priests, pilgrims, worshippers, walkers, sailors and those who have chanced upon the picturesque scene – are continuing a tradition of more than a thousand years of Christian praise and prayer on this spot.

In 1019 King Canute (of failing to hold back the tide fame and monarch of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and England) gave the land to a group of monks. Even before then there are stories of holy hermits living here.

The monks followed the rules of St Benedict (or Benet in medieval English). The annual service is organised by the St Benet’s Community, which is being expanded and revitalised by the Revd Ben Bradshaw, rector of the benefice of St Benedict’s, and also Prior of St Benet’s. It is for anyone, male or female, married or single, lay or clergy, interested in bringing inspiration from Benedictine spirituality into their day-to-day lives. New and existing members will pledge or renew their commitment as part of the annual service.

**Timings: The bishop will leave Ranworth Staithe aboard the wherry yacht Norada at about 1.30pm on Sunday July 27 and should arrive at St Benet’s at about 3.15pm, for the 3.30-4.10pm service. Organisers hope the bishop’s wherry will be accompanied by a second wherry yacht.**

[Bishop to arrive by wherry for St Benet's service this Sunday July 27 - Diocese of Norwich](https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/bishop-to-arrive-by-wherry-for-st-benets-service-this-sunday-july-27/)

The Power of a Legacy Gift

***An article written by Alison Hannah, PCC Secretary at All Saints Church in Old Buckenham.***

As a village church with increasing costs and an income that unfortunately doesn’t always match, the ‘unexpected’ is usually unwelcome – it often means an expense that wasn’t in the budget! However, there can be amazing ‘unexpected’ events, and last year we were taken completely by surprise when we received a legacy of £10,000 from the will of a local farmer – he wasn’t a member of the church but had lived in the village all his life and clearly felt ( as we would want all our parishioners to feel) that ‘All Saints’ was *his* church.

The gift came at a time when it could not have been more welcome. The ‘church rooms’ (the old village school, owned by the church and positioned at the entrance to the churchyard) was in the process of being decorated by tenants – who had leased the building for their new enterprise – a village bookshop and café. It had just become clear that a ‘little problem of water entry’ was actually a major roof issue – and that even worse, the disused chimney stack was in danger of collapse, threatening both the bookshop business and the church’s ability to rent out the building at all.

The cost of repair was far greater than we were expecting, and church funds were insufficient to the task. Then suddenly, we were informed we were to receive this unexpected gift – and with some careful juggling the work could be done and the project saved. The bookshop café is now open and providing a truly welcome addition to the life of the village; the church is receiving rent for a building that was becoming sad and neglected and we are delighted that it is now being loved, cared for, and used by so many. So we are incredibly grateful for that ‘unexpected’ event!

If you would like any advice about legacies or giving, please contact the generous giving team at [Generous Giving Team - Diocese of Norwich](https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/parish-support/parish-support-team/generous-giving-team/)

Christian Communications Awards

Have you got a fabulous photo of your church in action? Does your newsletter connect people across your community? Are your socials buzzing with energy? Is your website an easy-to-navigate mix of information and invitation?

Or perhaps you are a blogger, vlogger or Christian campaigner sharing the good news of Christ. The Norfolk Christian Communications Awards aim to recognise, reward and encourage good communications across Norfolk’s church community.

Entries are invited for:

* **Best church website –** the Bishop of Norwich Award**,** sponsored by the Bishop of Norwich.
* **Best organisation website**, sponsored by Hubb Church.
* **Best use of social media,** sponsored by YMCA Norfolk.
* **Best Christian communicator** – the Peter Barnes Award, sponsored by YMCA Norfolk.
* **Best newsletter** – digital or print, sponsored by YMCA Norfolk.
* **Best digital content** – video or audio, sponsored by Audio Electronic Design.
* **Best picture of ‘the church in action,’** sponsored by Network Norfolk.

The awards are being run by the Norfolk Christian community website Network Norfolk, to mark its 20th anniversary.

People can enter themselves or nominate others and the winners will be chosen by an expert judging panel and public vote.

Website publisher Keith Morris said: *“The whole purpose of our website is to encourage and provide good communications for the Norfolk Christian community and these awards are an extension of that aim.*

“*We want to encourage churches, organisations and members of the Christian community to enter themselves or others for recognition of their work.”*

Finalists will be invited to an awards evening at St John’s Roman Catholic Cathedral in Norwich on October 23, at which the Bishop of Norwich will be speaking.

The closing date for nominations is 5pm on Friday August 29. Visit [networknorfolk.co.uk](https://www.networknorwich.co.uk/Articles/718969/Network_Norwich_and_Norfolk/About_Us/Norfolk_Christian_Communications_Awards/Norfolk_Christian_Communications_Awards_are_now_open.aspx) to find out more and enter.

The Bishop’s Certificate in Christian Learning

Do you feel ready to embark on a spiritual journey which could deepen your Christian faith? A new course to explore, learn and discuss Christianity is now open to anyone over 18 within the Diocese of Norwich.

The Bishop’s Certificate in Christian learning is an opportunity to feel refreshed and inspired, or simply to learn more about the Christian faith.

If you are new to the faith and you would like to understand more, than this is the course for you. Equally, it’s open to anyone who has been a Christian for years and would value the experience of meeting with others and exploring more together.

All are welcome.

There are five subject areas containing five sessions. You are welcome to select one subject area or more. If you complete all five blocks, you will receive the Bishop’s Certificate in Christian Learning. The units are as follows:

* Unit 1: Inhabiting the New Testament.
* Unit 2: Exploring the Old Testament.
* Unit 3: Praying
* Unit 4: Shaping the Christian Life
* Unit 5: Sharing in God’s Mission

The next course starts on Saturday 27 September 2025 at 2pm for a 2.30pm start. The first session in each unit is in person on a Saturday, and the rest of the unit is online, either on Wednesday or Thursday evenings.

Full dates and information are online: [The Bishop's Certificate in Christian Learning - Diocese of Norwich](https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/mission-and-ministry/vocations/the-bishops-certificate-in-christian-learning/) or call the parish support team on 01603 880853.

To apply for a place, please email: BishopsCertificate@cathedral.org.uk

Shared Vocations Space

Are you thinking about a vocation in ordained or lay ministry? Would you like to explore this further?

The Shared Vocation Space opens its doors again on **17th September 2025** as the place for anyone in the Diocese of Norwich who wishes to explore a call to licensed ministry.

The programme gives you the chance to explore whether you are being called to play a role in Ministry. You can also discover the various pathways leading to Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM), Ordained Ministry (becoming a priest), Chaplaincy, Pioneer, Authorised Worship and Authorised Pastoral Assistant.

Hear vocations stories, explore Scripture and have the chance to think about some key issues relating to each ministry. There will be opportunities to explore your questions in small groups. By the end of the programme, you will be well placed to enter the formal selection process for either LLM or Ordained Ministry should you feel called to.

**Contact:**Register your interest via email to **lucy.dallas@dioceseofnorwich.org**. Lucy is the Diocesan Director of Ordinands.

The sessions are hosted by Revd Lucy Dallas and members of the DDO & LLM teams with contributions from mission practitioners alongside lay and ordained ministers from around and beyond the diocese.

*“The sessions have been incredibly informative, but also the style and pace of the sessions has allowed for sharing of perspectives and reflective discussion.”*

*“It was such precious time to have spent listening and learning as we explored the different areas of vocation together.”*

**Programme:**

* **Session 1**: Setting Out and Starting Out. Wednesday 17 September 2025 at 7-9pm St Luke’s, 61 Aylsham Road, Norwich NR3 2HF
* **Session 2**: Being Us: The Church of England, Thursday 16 October 2025 7-9pm Online
* **Session 3** Being Me: How God calls people. 13 November 2025 7-9pm online
* **Session 4** Being Sent Out: The Church of England and Christian Mission. 11th December 2025 7-9pm Online
* **Session 5** Trying Out: Knocking on the Door. 15 January 2025 at 7-9pm online
* **Session 6** Walking by Faith: What next? 11th February 2026 at 7-9pm at 7-9pm St Luke’s, Norwich