

# The Blyth Valley Team Ministry

## A Profile

**SEE US AT** [www.blythvalleychurches.org.uk](http://www.blythvalleychurches.org.uk)

### **ABOUT US**

We are lively and thriving Team Ministry

### **LOCATION**

The Blyth Valley Team Ministry is a rural/semi-rural benefice in the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Its centre is Halesworth in North East Suffolk. The benefice is 32 miles from Ipswich, the centre of diocesan administration, and 46 miles from our cathedral church at Bury St. Edmunds. It is 23 miles south-south-east of Norwich. We are nine miles inland from the Blyth Estuary and the picturesque seaside town of Southwold. This part of Suffolk is characterised by mile upon mile of unspoilt coastline and vast open skies. However, we are not isolated; Halesworth is just over two hours from London, Liverpool Street by train and there are regular services, some of which are direct.

### **HALESWORTH AND DISTRICT**

The Blyth Valley Team Ministry with eleven parishes, the Sole Bay Team Ministry with nine parishes, together with two three-parish benefices that have passed resolutions, make up the Halesworth Deanery.

North East Suffolk has seen profound changes since the Second World War. Mechanisation of farming has had a considerable influence on local communities and employment patterns. The Blyth Valley consists of a mix of deeply rooted Suffolk people together with many more recently arrived people. Both groups relate well; incomers strengthen the life of the Church. Our District Councils are Waveney District Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council. Although there is a great deal of agricultural land, relatively few people now work it. Most people are non-professional, with a core of professionals in the villages. People from every walk of life make up the local Church. The number of retired people is about twice the national average; however there are also many young families with children.

Halesworth is the centre of the Team. It has developed from a small market town, its population having more than doubled in the last 35 years to 4700 (16.2% under 16, 15.9% retired). A large number of people come to Halesworth to do their shopping and access services. The villages vary between those in which residents are generally in close proximity and those in which people are dispersed over a wide area. There are a number of second homes in the villages. The total adult population of the area is around 8,000 ([www.halesworth.net](http://www.halesworth.net)). The town and villages have good

community facilities, and most services can be found in the area. There are several primary schools and a middle school although the area is returning to the two tier system. Bungay High School is seven miles away with an excellent VIth form. The schools deliver an excellent education. There are other good secondary schools within moderate travelling distance. Halesworth has an excellent modern library with ICT facilities.

A modern GP centre and a GP led community hospital form the core of local health care. Acupuncture, physiotherapy, occupational and other therapies are available in the surgery and elsewhere. There is a teaching hospital at Norwich and general hospitals at Ipswich and Great Yarmouth. There are two dental practices in Halesworth.

Halesworth has good traditional High Street shopping, mostly on a pedestrianised thoroughfare, which caters for most everyday needs. There is a good range of restaurants, cafés and pubs.

The Arts are very much alive. There is an annual Halesworth Arts Festival lasting three weeks each October, the fourth and most recent being an outstanding success. Aldeburgh, the centre of the Aldeburgh Festival, is 25 minutes away. 'The Cut' ([www.newcut.org](http://www.newcut.org)) is our new arts centre and the churches are used for concerts. There is a local museum at the railway station. Theatres and cinemas are within easy travelling distance. There is an annual 'Gig in the Park' ([www.giginthepark.co.uk](http://www.giginthepark.co.uk)) which 8,500 people attended, and the nearby annual 'Latitude Festival' which attracted 15,000 last year. ([www.latitudefestival.co.uk](http://www.latitudefestival.co.uk))

## **THE TEAM MINISTRY**

The Blyth Valley is a long-established Team Ministry that has grown over 35 years. The Staffing establishment consists of:

- 1 Team Rector
- 1 Team Vicar
- .5 Priest/Team Vicar/Authorised Lay Minister
- 1 Team Priest (Ordained Local Minister)
- 1 Active Retired Priest
- 1 Reader
- 1 Team Administrator
- 11 Active Lay Elders (Pastoral Assistants)

Lay ministry flourishes at every level, administrative, pastoral and liturgical. Lay Elders, unique to the diocese, assist pastorally and liturgically. Eucharistic Ministers share with the clergy in taking the Reserved Sacrament to people at home, in hospital and in residential care.

## **ETHOS**

We have a straightforward Team mission statement:

*The Blyth Valley Team is called to demonstrate the love of God through:*

- *Reverent Worship*
- *The Quality of its Common Life*
- *Effective Outreach*

*after the example of Jesus Christ*

All Blyth Valley Team members have Team wide responsibility. Each member of staff is “owned” by all the churches. Individual priests and authorised ministers take the lead in different parishes and different areas of ministry as agreed from time to time. We seek to make the best use of the gifts people have, whether ordained or lay.

The Staff Team consists of women and men. We have a highly collaborative pattern of ministry, with clear roles, responsibilities, boundaries and lines of accountability. Whilst made up of eleven varied, separate parishes, there is a sense of loyalty towards the Team, which is increasingly seen not as an expedient, but as a model of ministry grounded in the Gospel.

The Blyth Valley Team Ministry continues to move towards a ‘minster model of ministry’ with St Mary’s seen as a centre and resource for the flourishing and strengthening of its sister parishes, with an increasing sense of interdependence between the village churches of the Team and with St Mary’s. All our parishes are important to us, and we seek to provide a pattern of church life appropriate to each.

We see ourselves as strongly inclusive.

## **TRADITION AND OUTLOOK**

Speaking generally, Team members are central to gently catholic in outlook, liberal in theology, and open to the community and individuals regardless of faith commitment. We continue to develop models of being Church in ways which are appropriate for and accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds in this part of Suffolk.

The Team and Team Council are not afraid of radical thinking, believing that God is best served and revealed through honest discussion and prayer grounded in thoughtfulness. We see the Christian Faith as dynamic – ‘one the earnest looking forward’. We do not seek easy answers, but to go on pilgrimage with all the people of our parishes, rooted and grounded in love.

The Blyth Valley Team Ministry is closely involved in local community life, committed to working with other agencies and to providing a visible witness to the Gospel in market place as well as in church.

## **THE ECUMENICAL DIMENSION**

There are strong ecumenical links between the Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic and United Reformed Churches, together with 'The Well', a charismatic evangelical church that meets in Holton Village Hall. 'Churches Together in the Blyth Valley' formed 6 years ago provides a forum and an executive means of taking ecumenism forward.

Priest and minister of all churches meet regularly to reflect and pray together as well as to manage the practicalities of ecumenical endeavour.

We expect to see a greater growing together in coming years. In 2009, there is a 'Churches Together Year of Mission', a sustained time of outreach to the local community. As the shape of the Team Ministry develops and changes, the ecumenical dimension is very much in our minds.

## **LITURGY**

Parishes use both Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer. The main Eucharist tends to be Rite 1 (Modern Language). Congregations value traditional forms, but there is also a willingness to explore contemporary patterns of worship. Vestments are worn. Incense is occasionally used at Halesworth. Our intention is always to lead liturgy well after thorough preparation, as eucharistic presidency is at the heart of Christian priesthood. We share together in the development of worship, including alternative forms of worship.

We have a number of regular Team services. A Team Eucharist a thematic, all-age Eucharist, takes place at St. Mary's Halesworth on the first Sunday morning of each month at the same time as a 'Godly Play' session for ages 4-11 in the church hall. There is a 'Junior Church' at Halesworth for children throughout the Team alongside the main Sunday Eucharist. Numbers attending worship vary throughout the Team. Some congregations are very small, and the proportion of retired persons is high. Despite this, many of our electoral rolls are slowly increasing as new people arrive and grow into church and community life.

## TEAM COUNCIL

The Team Council consists of the Rector, the Staff, Lay Chair, Clerk (who is also the Team Administrator) Treasurer and one elected member or alternate from each Parochial Church Council.

The Team Council shares, with the Rector and the Staff, responsibility for all ordained and authorised ministry within the Team, including the appointment of lay elders and eucharistic ministers. It determines the allocation of Parish Share to individual parishes from the whole allocated to the benefice. It raises a Team Share from the parishes for the payment of ministerial expenses, administration, Team worship, evangelism, education and training.

It is responsible, with the Rector and the Staff, for developing and implementing Team-wide policy, including Health and Safety, Child Protection, pastoral care, patterns of worship and all matters of common concern. From time to time, it facilitates Team Conferences and study days. It also shares responsibility for ecumenical relationships, and represents the benefice churches on Churches Together in the Blyth Valley.

The Team Council shares responsibility for the high-quality communication vital to maintain and develop a large multi-parish benefice, including the production of an excellent monthly magazine, 'Team Times' and our Team website, to be found at [blythvalleychurches.org.uk](http://blythvalleychurches.org.uk)

## THE PARISHES

The constituent parishes of the Team Ministry are:

	POPULATION	ELECTORAL ROLL
Blyford, All Saints	86	22
Bramfield, St. Andrew	400	21
Chediston, St. Mary	180	26
Halesworth, St. Mary	4700	81
Holton, St. Peter	760	52
Linstead, St. Margaret of Antioch	125	16
Spexhall, St. Peter	188	14
Thorington, St. Peter	40	12
Walpole, St. Mary	280	19
Wenhaston, St. Peter	850	51
Wissett, St. Andrew	200	32
	<b>7809</b>	<b>335</b>

*(All figures are approximate. Sources: 2001 Census and Electoral Roll Officers)*

## **CHALLENGES**

As our mission statement says, we are called to demonstrate the love of God. We understand that we need to change and adapt in order to proclaim the Good News afresh to each generation. We have eleven buildings, some of outstanding historical interest, but need to use our buildings effectively in the service of our town and village communities. Most of our churches are in good order. We are aware that St Mary's Halesworth, our central church, needs considerable work doing to its interior to make it a more community friendly building and we see its regeneration as a primary objective.

We are deeply rooted in the Anglican tradition, yet we acknowledge that we must promote worship that speaks to the present generation, at times when people are able to come. We are realistic enough to understand that we ourselves must change if we are to meet wider needs and keep the rumour of God alive. Our communities are ageing, yet there are many young people and families. We seek to draw them to Christ with gentleness and sensitivity, yet we know that we too must be transformed if we are to be used to transform others.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Blyth Valley is a good place to be, both in terms of local community and of the life of the Church. We believe it is a good place to go on pilgrimage with Jesus Christ, in the company of others, to the kingdom of God.

We hope you will come to journey with us, enrich us and allow us to enrich you.