



Serving Suffolk Communities

Diocesan Overview

The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich was founded in 1914. Uniquely, it includes almost the whole of the County of Suffolk, the exceptions being an area of North East Suffolk around Lowestoft and for one parish in the county of Essex. It encompasses a geographical area of over 1,400 square miles.

In 2005, there were over 602,000 people living in the Diocese. Out of this population over 25,000 claim allegiance to the Church of England by being members of the church electoral roll and over 20,000 attend church services every Sunday. About ten percent of Suffolk people attend parish churches at Christmas. Yet, the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich has one of the lowest numbers of clergy per parish in the county.

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, the Right Reverend Nigel Stock, leads a large team of people spreading the Gospel of Christ throughout the diocese. He is assisted in his task by the Suffragan Bishop of Dunwich, two Archdeacons and the Dean of St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

The Diocese is currently split into three Archdeaconries, each of which is made up of a number of deaneries, totalling nineteen (19) in all. Each deanery has a Rural Dean appointed to act as a local leader of the clergy in the deanery.

Active lay involvement in the running of the Deaneries is vital and very much appreciated with varied roles ranging from administration arrangements for the allocation of Parish Share (Deanery Organisers) to the organisation of youth work. Within these deaneries there are approximately 182 benefices, 443 parishes and 479 church buildings of which 453 are of listed status. There are 163 stipendiary clergy and 51 Ordained Local Ministers, together with 467 non-stipended people working for the mission of the church either as ordained priests or licensed Readers.

The Diocesan Cathedral Church of St James is in the town of Bury St Edmunds on the Old Abbey site famous for being the place of the signing of the Magna Carta. Set within the county town of Ipswich, the Diocesan Office is located in the modern offices adjoining the recently renovated and enlarged St. Nicholas Centre. Its small professional team provides financial, secretarial, property and general support to the parishes in the administration of the diocesan budget as well as the delivery of synodical decision-making.

The Diocesan education team, youth team, ministry course and many other support ministries are organised from bases around the diocese.

Although one of the newer Dioceses in the country, St Edmundsbury and Ipswich has found itself at the forefront of setting standards of *“good practice”*, in providing a missionary platform for the proclamation of the Gospel and of setting standards in sound financial management.

Suffolk is genuinely considered a truly pleasant rural county. It is also one of art and culture. Whilst it certainly contains many “chocolate box” pretty villages and miles of unspoilt coastline, it should also be noted that within the County of Suffolk itself, there exists several serious problems reflective of both urban and rural deprivation. Efforts are being made to address the historic lack of affordable housing, to continue the improvement of public transport, and support the farming industry which has been long-established in Suffolk and to minister to those “on the street” in need of protection.