PARISH PROFILE

St Mary’s and St Peter’s are two churches in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, in the diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. We are a single parish with two churches, a parish community centre and multiple congregations. The electoral roll is 320.

BUILDINGS

**St Mary’s** is the town centre civic church, situated next to the cathedral. It was established in the 1300’s, and is one of the country’s largest and finest parish churches. It is also home to the regimental chapel of the Suffolk Regiment and its successor regiment, the Royal Anglians. In the past few years we have reordered the front of the nave to give more flexibility for worship and events, installed under-pew heaters, relocated the cenotaph beside the regimental chapel, and installed a kitchen. We are hoping to reorder the west end to make it more welcoming and usable.

**St Peter’s** was built as a church plant from St Mary’s in 1858. It is situated on the edge of the historic grid that makes up the centre of the town and has always remained part of the same parish. In 2007 we completed a reordering, with removal of pews, making the building more flexible.

**The Hyndman Centre** is the former St Peter’s School. We completed a major redevelopment in 2012, creating additional rooms. It is extremely well used by the community and we estimate that there are at least 30000 visits to the centre each year. This has increased significantly.

SOCIAL SETTING

The parish covers the south-eastern part of Bury and has a population of 12600. There is a wide range of housing within the parish, with about 75% owner occupied. A significant new housing development is planned for the east side of the parish.

The major employers within the parish are the West Suffolk Hospital, Greene King brewery, the BMI St Edmunds hospital, the police station and detention centre, and shops and offices in the town part of the parish.

There are several schools in the parish, and we have particularly strong links with Guildhall Feoffment Primary school (St Mary’s) and Westgate Primary school (St Peter’s). Other schools in the parish are St Edmunds (RC) and Hardwick primary schools; Horringer Court Middle school (part of the County Upper Academy group) and the St Louis section of St Benedicts high school. Riverwalk School is for those with particular special needs. The South Lee private school is also in the parish.

There are a number of residential homes: 11 Cullum Road, Glastonbury Court and Cornwallis Court. Drummond Court care home is also located in the parish.

WORKING WITH OTHER CHURCHES

We work closely together with other churches in the parish and town.

Southgate Community Church was established from St Mary’s and St Peter’s in 1974 as an ecumenical church plant on the Nowton Estate. Although it lies within the parish of St Mary with St Peter, it is fully independent.

In 1985, Christ Church was established as a church plant from the parish, as the Moreton Hall estate grew, and it is now a thriving independent parish.
We are members of Churches Together and the vicar meets regularly with other ministers in the town to pray, and joins the cathedral staff for prayers on Friday mornings. There are many cross church initiatives that people are actively involved in: Christians against Poverty, Bury Drop in, Town Pastors, Bury Christian Youth, Sporting 87 (a Christian football club), Spectrum (a non-denominational organisation which puts on courses to help Christians engage in issues relating to faith and culture), Fair Trade and the St John’s Centre.

CHURCH TRADITION AND VISION
The parish has a strong evangelical tradition, and we seek to:

**worship** *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit*
- this is our first priority, with major emphasis on the times when we worship together, and on the monthly parish prayer meeting.

**teach** *the Bible in a way relevant to everyday life*
- the majority of sermons are expository

**grow** *people in faith, understanding and love*
- we seek to do this through Sunday teaching, the ‘big subject’, a silent retreat, parish weekend, small groups and short courses. We run regular marriage preparation courses, and courses on prayer. We tap into many of the courses that are being run by the diocese and other organisations.

**equip** *people to serve others*
- we have run listening and bereavement courses. We seek to challenge/enable people to give, and serve – overseas (Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Albania, Ethiopia), in their communities, through Bury church initiatives, through our own parish initiatives and in serving the parish community (bell ringing, choir, music group, stewarding, cleaning, serving on fabric committees etc).

**offer** *people opportunities to meet Jesus and discover forgiveness and new life*
- we run Introducing Jesus courses, Alpha and Christianity/Life explored courses; we also see the occasional offices and civic services as opportunities for ‘sowing seeds’, and are looking at ways of improving signage at St Mary’s so that we can better speak of Jesus to visitors.

Each of the churches has its own vision statement, and website.

www.stpetersbse.uk
www.wearechurch.net

STAFF TEAM
The current staff team consists of the incumbent (who is vicar of St Mary’s), associate vicar (who is vicar of St Peter’s), curate, 4 licensed readers and a licensed lay minister (lay pastor) and the parish administrator. We are hoping to appoint a children and family worker based at St Peter’s. We also have 3 ordained priests with permission to officiate, and 3 retired clergy with permission to officiate. The staff team is committed to the growth of every member ministry, and we see the role of the staff team as one of enabling the people of God to exercise their ministries (Eph 4:12).

SUNDAY SERVICES
We offer a range of regular Sunday services with different styles. At St Mary’s we have an 8am Holy Communion (BCP), a loose liturgical but informal 9:30am service for all ages, a traditional 11am service with robed choir, and a flexible 6:30pm service. At St Peter’s we have a 10:45am service which has a community feel and is liturgical and informal, and we started in 2016 an afternoon service primarily for families with younger children, Sunday@4.
Each of our main morning services is served by their own team of ministers (lay non-licensed, lay licensed and ordained), and each congregation sets its own specific foci.
There is a midweek communion service on Wednesdays at St Mary’s.

![Church Sunday attendance chart]

![Attendance at specific services chart]

Congregations are primarily middle class in both churches. There is little socio-economic difference between the congregations at St Mary’s and St Peter’s, although the 9.30am service at St Mary’s has a younger congregation, and increasing numbers of young people are coming to St Peter’s café church (at 10.45am on the first Sunday of the month). We struggle to attract people who live in social housing, and recognise this as a weakness. There is social housing in Raingate Street, near St Peter’s and on the Newton Estate. We also have had little impact on the Horringer Court housing estate.

Our main area of growth has been families with younger children at the 9.30am service, and more recently at the Sunday@4 service.
OTHER SERVICES

Annual civic services at St Mary’s: St George’s day, Battle of Britain, Remembrance. In 2016 the average attendance for these services was 814. We also hold an annual Jankyn Smyth memorial service, with children from the Guildhall Feoffment primary school and residents of the Guildhall Feoffment almshouses.

Carol services: Mayor’s carol service, West Suffolk Women’s Institute, Ridgeon’s (the construction company), Schools (Westgate, Guildhall Feoffment, St Louis, Horringer Court Middle, County Upper)

Other regular services: Hospice songs of praise, Town memorial service, and a joint Ascension day service with the cathedral.

Other one off services: We have held two significant military funerals in the last few years, several other military services and a big celebrity wedding!

OCCASIONAL OFFICES
MINISTRY AMONG FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN
We have a thriving weekly parent and toddler group (Little Fishes), with about 50 people attending, and a waiting list. ‘Mini-church’ for families with young children, meeting once a month, has grown out of this, and has developed into Sunday@4. We run a monthly café church at both St Peter’s and an all age service on the first Sunday of the month at the 9.30am service at St Mary’s. We have been putting a great deal of emphasis on these services.

MINISTRY AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNGER PEOPLE
We have regular Sunday contact with about 70 children. This includes boys in choir, and children/young people attending services.
In addition we run a holiday club, Advent workshop, and have put on the LIFE exhibition every other year (catering for about 900 children).
We run Amplify, a bible study for young people (about 4-8 young people).

We take safeguarding very seriously, and at the end of 2016, we had DBSs for 30 people with 8 pending (excluding licensed staff who have diocesan CRB’s)

MINISTRY AMONG MEN AND WOMEN
A group of men from the parish run a work for men, which includes a monthly breakfast, weekly bible studies and lunch, monthly parish walks and occasional evangelistic and social events.
MINISTRY AMONG OLDER PEOPLE
We have taken regular services in two of the residential homes in the parish: 11 Cullum Road and Cornwallis Court. We run a monthly Tea and Chat (numbering 20-30 people) and lunch and chat (numbering 45-60 people).

MINISTRY AMONG PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
The Sometimes on Sunday group has recently been established, and is developing links with Drummond Court, the Priory school and special needs groups who use the Hyndman Centre.

MINISTRY TO TOURISTS
St Mary’s church is a national treasure, and our prayer is that when visitors come to our building their eyes will be opened so that they see the eternal. The church is open during the day, and is manned by a team of volunteer stewards. In 2016 we had 14260 visitors. In recent years we have put on exhibitions about Mary Tudor, the bible, the BCP and we now have a display about ‘What Christians believe’. We are about to display a series of banners depicting scenes from the life of Jesus. The building is also regularly used for concerts and other events.

MINISTRY BEYOND THE PARISH
We have had strong links in the past with the diocese of Kiteto in Tanzania, where the previous incumbent became bishop. More recently these have weakened, and we are looking to build links with an orphanage in Zimbabwe, a project in Albania and in 2016 one of our families went with Serving in Mission to work in Addis Ababa at the Bingham Academy. Both churches have their own mission focus groups, seeking to promote practical engagement with the work of overseas and domestic mission. We aim to give a tenth of all general income away.

OUR CURRENT PARISH FOCUS

1. To grow our existing main Sunday morning congregations through developing teams of people to lead each of the services. To also look at how we can grow our 6:30pm service.

2. To appoint a full time children and families worker for St Peter’s

3. To grow our small groups (we currently have 18), and task-orientated groups, so that they are communities centred on Christ, often lay led, where people learn together and are equipped to serve and witness.

4. To grow our work with young people, seeking volunteers who can head up this work.

5. To encourage people to commit themselves to grow in their individual discipleship, particularly through daily prayer and bible reading, regular worship with other Christians and active involvement in practical service.

6. To consider how we might best serve any new homes built on the proposed sites within the parish to the east and west of the Rougham Road.

Our conviction is that the greatest need for individuals and our society is to hear the story of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, his invitation for people to come to him to receive forgiveness, new life and hope, and for people to be drawn into the community which meets to worship God and seeks to put him at the centre of everything.