



Parish Review 2018

**Our goal is to
Know Christ and make Him Known**

1. Growing in God and in our Worship

2018 will probably be a year remembered for its building projects. For a number of years, our chancel ceiling has been gradually crumbling. Urgent repair work was required. We were concerned at the significant cost, which was estimated to be over £50,000. However, God was good and the actual costs were much closer to £35,000. By withdrawing some money from one of our trust funds and securing grants from such bodies as the Garfield Weston Foundation and Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, we were able to fund the work. Of course, at the same time we had the problem that thieves had stolen four tons of lead from the south aisle roof. Luckily, due to having a roof alarm installed, most of this cost was covered by insurance. A new stainless steel roof was fixed on before the year ended. We are extremely grateful to Mark Langston for his hard work on both these projects.

It would be wrong, however, to think of 2018 purely in terms of building projects. As this booklet shows, St John's continues to be a thriving community of faith. An awful lot goes on here, considering our size. I hope you enjoy reading this booklet. Our goal continues to be to know Christ and make him known and this should underpin all that we do here at St John's.



Our main times of gathering take place on Sunday mornings. We have a variety of worship styles set in a variety of service formats. Family church, at 9:30am on the first Sunday of each month, is very popular and attracts many who don't come to any other services. Breakfast church, at 9:30am on the third Sunday of each month, is an informal service with contemporary songs, preceded by coffee and croissants, is also very popular. On these two Sundays, we have more traditional church services at 11.00am and these are also greatly valued, offering a more reflective experience of worship. On other Sundays, we meet all together at 10:30am with a mix of the traditional and contemporary.

It is important, I think, to offer this variety of worship styles. On the one hand, it shows that we want to be inclusive of people's preferred mode of worship, but, more importantly on the other hand, we want to be as attractive as possible to those on the outside who are yet to experience for themselves the joy of knowing the Lord Jesus.

As said above, our goal is to know Christ and make him known. Our services include time reflecting on God's word. This is how God speaks to us and so we take the preaching of God's word very seriously. We want to grow in depth. We want to be a friendly congregation, offering hospitality and inviting others to join us. We desire them to know Christ, as we know him. The Westminster Shorter Catechism states that "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." This should always be the goal of our worship at St John's and it should be our desire to see others in our community invited to join us..



I am very grateful to everybody who enables our Sunday worship to thrive in the way that it does. Thank you to all engaged in music ministry, whether traditional (the organ in the choir) or contemporary (our music groups). Thank you to all who help reading the Bible, with Intercessions, serving coffee and welcoming, not to mention all who do the jobs behind the scenes, such as cleaning, flower arranging, counting money and so on.

Peter Goodridge

2. Music groups and Community Choir

It's been wonderful to be part of such an enthusiastic church band with great musical direction allowing members to play their part in uniting and singing praise to God. The songs always fit the service so well and the band normally get-together 45 minutes beforehand to practice and iron out any creases. The full band play at Family Church and

Breakfast Church, with the latter probably being the most difficult - it is hard to practice with croissants and coffee being passed from kitchen to band members making it fun, but sometimes too enjoyable to play and sing whilst partaking of the breakfast goodies. Once the service commences the coffee cups and crumbs disappear and everyone is ready to play their part. The band has grown over the last year and with the introduction of a small group of singers, who lead with some incredible harmonies and enthusiasm it is very uplifting for musicians and congregation alike.

In the autumn we invited anyone who enjoys singing to come along to Community Choir. The choir performed at the Carols by Candlelight Service in December. We had two rehearsals which focused on vocal warm ups and learning two songs for the service. At the service the choir looked very coordinated and dapper in red and black and performed brilliantly. The next Community Choir event is scheduled for Easter.

Sue Wright and John Evans

3. Robed Choir and Organ

At St. John's, we have a small robed choir which leads the hymn singing for three Sundays in the month. We rehearse twice monthly and aim to produce choir items for Easter, Harvest, Remembrance Sunday and Christmas. It is always a pleasure to be involved in weddings and hopefully it is helpful when we are required to sing at funeral services. New members will always be welcome to boost our numbers.

We are fortunate to have a fine two-manual Henry Jones organ, which is a pleasure to play and is used most Sundays, sometimes sharing the music with the band. At present, we have two organists and it would be wonderful to have an extra person to share this role. If you are that person who may be interested in playing the organ, please make contact.

Jean Turner

4. Young people

a. Sundays and Schools work

Children's work continues at St John's continues in various formats. Family Church has been taking place for several decades. Messy Church is our latest initiative, which began in August 2018 (see below), initially replacing Holiday Club. Schools work continues with the clergy taking regular assemblies (2 or three times a term), Open the book (see below) and special school services in the church at Harvest and Christmas.

Explorers takes place on Sunday mornings in term times during regular 10.30am services using Scripture Union material. An informal

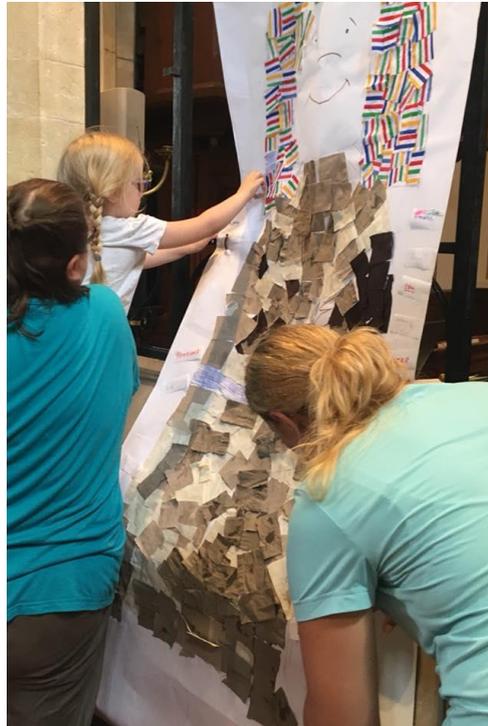


crèche is also available for the very young each week with toys. A Pathfinders group also met up to the Summer – it was put on hold due to a lack of children in that age group. CYFA (14 to 18's) met on Sunday evenings at the Rectory throughout the year.

Thanks to all who work with our young people, both in the church and the community.

Peter Goodridge

b. Messy Church



Messy Church has been running since August 2018 and as its name suggests it is a time for getting messy and having fun. The aim behind it is to encourage children and adults to come and experience Church in an informal atmosphere and allow those leading it to pass on the message of the Gospel in a more relaxed manner.

At Messy Church we play games, you have to be good at missing the water pistol or the flying missiles, we have a joke box, and sing action songs, no need for the gym when it's Messy Church week. We have a bible story, which involves everyone in some way and we back this up with a craft relative to the story. It is surprising what you can do with a paper plate, flower pot, block of wood and of course plenty of glue sticks, that's the messy bit!!

As you can imagine all this activity makes everyone hungry and the Messy Church Cafe is open all the time to provide coffee and cake and at the end of the session a buffet lunch or tea. I would not like to think how many cakes and crisps etc. have been consumed since we started. While we are all enjoying refreshments it gives us a chance to have a chat with the parents and anyone else who has come along, we have had grandparents, friends and aunts and uncles.

In 2018, the annual "I can't wait for Christmas" Christmas Eve service was renamed "Messy Nativity" and some paper plate craft introduced – it was great to see 115 people come and enjoy this service.

Messy Church is open to everyone no matter what your age. Come along for some fun.

Lorna Scott

5. Healing Services

Healing is one of the spiritual gifts that the Lord gave to His Church. This ministry has been going on in the life of St John's. The church organises healing services from time to time. Last year we had three healing services. We have a team of eight people that meet ahead of each healing service to plan and pray for the service. Also, they commit themselves to prayer every Tuesday in preparation to the service. We do have the service of healing and wholeness at 10.30 Holy Communion Service. We encourage you to invite anyone you know that is in need, or come and stand in for your loved ones as we join our faith together trusting God for healing.

Ernest Okeke

6. Prayer Life

“Relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing had yet been done”
C.S. Lewis.

So we at St John's know that when we pray we come alongside Christ, stand with him in the Father's presence, break through the limitations of time and space and be assured that our prayers are both heard and honoured. We meet every Saturday in the Church room at 9 am, have a short Bible reflection, and use the rest of the time to pray for the Church, the world and ourselves. We have experienced incredible answers to prayers and we encourage you to be part of it.

There is also the ongoing prayer chain (Knee-Mail) organised by Jane Langston. If you have any prayer need contact her via phone or email and when you do so, be assured that some people will be praying for that need. Prayer requests are strictly confidential.

And after the monthly 10:30 Communion Sunday, there is someone waiting to hear your needs who is ready to pray with you in the Chapel. We do appreciate all those who lead intercessions in our Sunday services. How great is the result of your prayers in the life of the Church and people.

'Thy Kingdom Come' is a prayer initiative led by the Church of England for evangelisation. Every year between Ascension Day and Pentecost, the Church prays for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We marked last year 'Thy Kingdom Come' with varieties of Spirit filled activities and services at St John's. We had a Service of Healing and Wholeness, Celtic Prayer, Stations of the Resurrection, a Praise and Prayer evening and the Pentecost morning service. And finally, a refreshing family afternoon tea followed with Christians Together Pentecost Celebration.

Ernest Okeke

7. Small Groups

a. Home Groups

Three Bible study groups continue to meet during 2018, two on Wednesdays and a group meets on alternate Tuesday evening. We meet to share our needs, pray for one another and discuss the Bible. We often use a Bible study book guide and other Bible related

materials to aid our studies. Home groups offer us opportunity to ask those questions we might not find time to ask in a Church service. It is a lively place to be. We benefit a lot when we study the Bible together. You are invited to be part of one of these groups.

Ernest Okeke

b. Coffee Break

Coffee break is a wonderful place to be, we meet at the Rectory every Monday at 10 am in term time. We enjoy nice biscuits, chocolates, hot tea and coffee as we chat with each other. It offers a good opportunity to listen to a refreshing Bible based talk known as the "Thought for The Day". Do come and join us.

Ernest Okeke

c. Mum's The Word

'Mum's The Word' is usually held on Thursday morning from 10am to 11:15. The focus is on Bible discussion with mums from St John's Church and beyond. The group meets during term time at the Rectory and is led by Lisa Goodridge. The numbers are quite encouraging. We also offer a crèche for those with young children so that the mums can concentrate on the Bible discussion.

The group has been going well and, since the autumn, has been looking at the gospel of Mark, which everyone has found enriching. We discuss questions and issues relating to the Bible. Prayers are always said collectively. I can say that the group is doing extremely well.

Onyinye Okeke

8. Christianity Explored

Seven of us met together to do this excellent course over 6 weekly sessions during June and July. After a social time together over dessert with tea or coffee, we enjoyed exploring who Jesus is by looking at the testimony and reliability of Mark's gospel account of Jesus' life and teaching.

The sessions are informal and start with a video which introduces the session and raises some questions for discussion. Each person is given a Mark's gospel and a course booklet which links up with the video to guide us through the Bible passages and discussion for the session. There is no obligation to answer questions or contribute – it is a course where people can be relaxed, ask any questions, comment or express their opinion - or just sit and listen.

Everybody attending seemed to be challenged and gained more understanding of the life and claims of Jesus. It is a course which helps both Christians and those wanting to find out more about Christianity.

Mike and Lynda Brown

9. Ladies Lunch

The St John's Ladies Lunch is held once a month on a Friday in the Wesley Hall. During 2018 an average of 35 ladies met to enjoy a light lunch of homemade soup, bread and cheese, fruit, cake and tea or coffee. At each meeting there was a short talk covering various subjects of interest such as the dementia work at West Suffolk Hospital and the newly built cardiac diagnostic wing at the Hospital. A charity is supported each year by donating loose change and in 2018 over £100 was raised for "My Wish Charity" the cardiac diagnostic wing. Other months speakers gave an insight into their life and faith including information about "Solo Housing" a charity which supports homeless people in Suffolk and Norfolk.

In the summer the ladies visited Luke's Wood; a picnic of fish and chips was delivered by the local shop and a good time was had by all. A Macmillan Coffee Morning was organised in the autumn which was very well attended by friends and neighbours and a festive Christmas lunch was enjoyed in December.

A programme card is available giving the 2019 events and all ladies are welcome. A list is in the church for names to be added each month. Any further information can be obtained from Brenda Begg on 242025.

We thank God for another year of fun and fellowship and committee members are grateful to all who assist in any way. We look forward to our future lunches at the Blackbourne.

Margaret Hitchins

10. Men's Breakfast

Every 10 weeks or so, a group of men gather in the church room to enjoy a hearty breakfast. This consists of what may be called a "great big fry up" - sausages, eggs, bacon, black pudding, mushrooms, beans and tomatoes. How much of it you actually eat is entirely up to you. And then there is tea, coffee or fruit juice.

After this consumption of most of the day's calories, we come to the more serious side of the matter. A guest speaker has been invited to speak to us for about 20 minutes on a subject with a Christian or charitable theme. Some recent speakers have given very interesting talks on many diverse subjects, including the Lowestoft revival of the early 1920s, Christian youth work in the diocese, the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen and the work of SARS (Suffolk Accident Rescue Service).

Participants are asked to make a donation at each meeting to cover costs and allow a donation to be made to a charity of the speakers choice, the most recent being given to Tearfund.

Come and enjoy a couple of hours on a Saturday morning. A list to put your name on will appear at the back of the church shortly before each event.

Tony Chaplin

11. Summer Fair

In June we held our annual summer fair at the Wesley Centre.

Many people came and sat outside enjoying the BBQ food. Others ventured inside to taste the wares at the cafe whilst being entertained by John Evans, our resident guitarist.

In the garden, the children had great fun playing various games, having a tattoo or having their faces painted. They also learnt more about Jesus through play and activities at the Messy Church area.



For others there were the old favourites, books, cakes and jam, gifts, plants and bric a brac for sale or try their luck at the tombola, raffle or water into wine.

Many thanks to all my helpers, those who donated and those who came and supported this event.



What a great afternoon we had, raising funds to further the work of St John's and making new friends within our community.

Katrina Bull

12. Christmas Fair

What another lovely afternoon - a big thank you to everyone who helped with so many lovely stalls. In 2018 we had some wonderful donations from some of the new local businesses wishing to support St Johns in their work in the local community, as well as the usual kind local folk who always support us.

Santa's grotto and the children's games area was fantastic and the café was very enjoyable, with lots of cakes, teas and coffees served.



Instead of our large raffle, we had a small raffle but a very successful “grand tombola” which we hope to continue with in 2019. There was a lot of competition to win the afternoon tea at Cafe Rouge as well as the Fish And Chip supper and the Burger meal for two. Building on our successes we have some great ideas for the next Christmas Fair including a hamper raffle, as we found the luxury hampers donated to us were also a popular prize.

Great fun was had by all concerned, not least those organising it, and it was a wonderful start to the Christmas season.

Rosie Ellis and the team

13. Other Social Occasions

2018 was an excellent social year for St John’s. The social activities at St John’s are not only a lovely way to bond as a church family and grow within deeper friendships, they are often also chances to perform outreach activities and fundraise for special causes.

In February we had a lovely little pancake party on Shrove Tuesday. The church was room was used “café style” and attracted all ages. We also had the marvellous Quiz Night featuring sausage casserole.

Despite “the Beast from the East”, we held our Movie Night in March – showing the *Lion King* at 4pm and *Miracles from Heaven* in the evening. There was a small “tuck shop” and attendance was good, considering the weather!



A few weeks later we had the Church Spring Walk – a lovely countryside stroll around Elmswell.



When the weather was significantly different (too hot!!) we had our Annual Church BBQ at the Rectory. The paddling pool and gazebos provided relief from the temperatures, as we munched on burgers, sausages, salads and ice creams! This event was extra special as this year we celebrated Ernest's ordination (which occurred the day before) with his extended family and friends – many of which had travelled hundreds, or thousands, of miles to be there!

Moving into Autumn, we had another very successful Quiz Night (this time with quiche, crudités and baguettes), followed by the hilarious Variety & Spice event – a fun evening of music, poetry, sketches, jokes and a whole lot of laughs! This is quickly becoming a highlight of every year!



Autumn also saw the second Church Walk of the year and a special "Beads and Brunch" ladies event where we learnt about important work in an African community and had the opportunity to purchase jewellery made by some of the African ladies.

Frances Hall

14. Marriage By Design

Marriage By Design is a day of marriage preparation developed by Care for the Family. At St John's, we run this every year to help engaged couples prepare for married life. MBD provides the opportunity for couples to spend quality time talking with their fiancé about their relationship, hopes, dreams and fears for the future. The day suggests various skills to help their marriage be as strong and robust as it can be.

The Church Room was again romantically decorated and all the couples had a very enjoyable and productive day. Many thanks again to those who prepared a wonderful lunch.

Peter Goodridge

15. On being the Curate at St John's

It is a year and eight months we have been together in this journey of faith. A call to know God and make His love known. We strive to be a community of faith that bear witness in Elmswell, to the living Christian faith open to all and rejecting none.

Here is the summary of some of the amazing things that happened during this period.

- I was ordained deacon in 2017. It was a period of transition in every sense. However, I continue to thank you all for your great support which made things a lot easier for me.
- February 2018 witnessed the arrival of my family at the pick of winter, or as our Church warden used to say "During the Beast from the East".
- Four months after their arrival, my priesthood ordination took place, in June to be precise. It was an occasion to welcome families and friends across the globe.
- Apart from our normal pastoral responsibilities, I still under go continual ministerial development training, which involves monthly cohort meetings, study days and Residential weekends. The residential weekend in 2018 was on the 23th – 25th of February and focused on "Mission and Evangelism".



Finally, I still continue in my roles learning through experience both here in St John's and other support groups. And this year, I will be taking services at Finborough Court and I hope to join the Bury street pastors.

Ernest Okeke

16. The Friends of St John's Church

The 'Friends' was started in 1995 when St John's Church needed work to be done on the chancel roof. Since then we have raised over £50,000 for the Fabric of the church. Our activities in 2018 included the usual Coffee Morning,

Afternoon Tea at the Wesley preceded by a Beetle Drive and to commemorate 100 years of the end of the 1st World War, an exhibition of memorabilia and poppies draped from the gallery, which we shared with the Friday Ladies' Lunch group.. There were lots of

visitors and some family reunions, which made for a most enjoyable weekend, with special visits from the school.

New members of the Friends are very welcome - subscription is just £5 per annum.

Jean Folkard

17. Christians Together in Elmswell (CTIE)

a. General Information

The group includes the Anglican Church of St John the Divine, the Baptist Church and some members of Norton Salvation Army who are resident in the village. Unfortunately in 2018 we were unable to run the Holiday Club, but St John's is holding Messy Church sessions which are very successful.

At Christmastime CTIE sang carols on the Green, accompanied by the SA Band and with the Christmas story performed by the Open the Book team.

Other joint services take place during the year, at Easter and Pentecost, at which the talks are given by representatives of the three churches.

Jean Folkard

b. Open the Book

GOOD NEWS! We are still able to get together and present stories from The Old and New Testaments to the children at Elmswell Primary School.

Apart from "The Christmas Story" and "The Easter Story" which we always cover, in 2018 we have presented the likes of "The Fall of Jericho", "Samuel hears a voice", "David the Giant Killer", Solomon "The Wise King", "Jonah the Groaner" and "Daniel and the Lions"

For some stories, I have collected some super props from Brian Clarke in Thurston who has a garage full of virtually anything you would need for the particular story. Brian is the props co-ordinator for all the Schools etc. in the area who take part in "Open the Book"

We are blessed to have Tony Cock from The Baptist Church playing the piano and he finds new songs to sing which the children can join in. Stephen Spurgeon and Maryann from The Baptist Church have joined in when possible and we are so glad to have Barbara Yeates back with us as she is able to narrate the stories sitting down.

Although some stories may re-appear sometimes, we are always able to find something different even if it is with costumes, props or songs to sing.

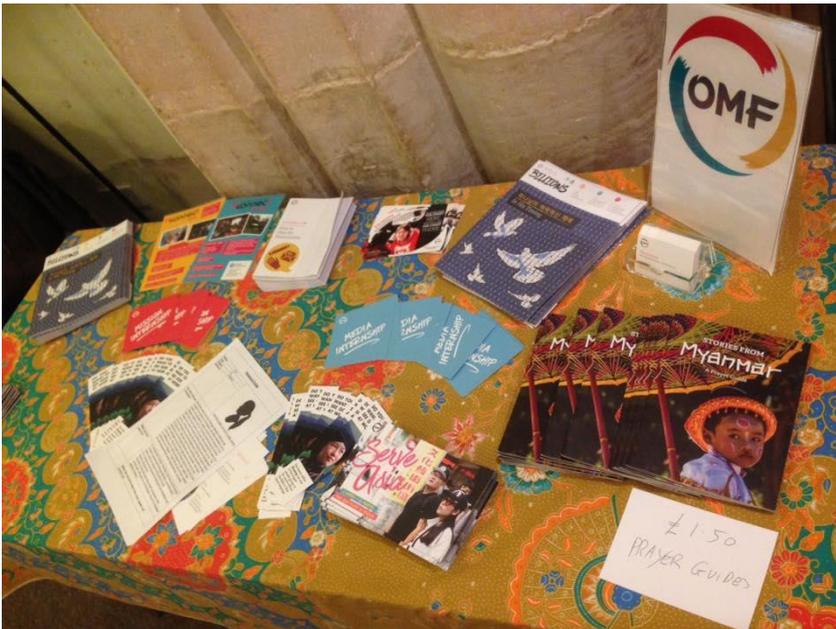
If YOU feel this is something you would like to be part of, get in touch with me and you would be very welcome. At the time of writing we have myself, Tina, Dorothy, Barbara and Mark from St. John's and Tony, Stephen, Jackie and Maryann from The Baptist Church.

Brenda Begg

18. International and Home Mission Committee

Looking back over the past year it is interesting to note the range of mission activity with which St John's is associated, in prayer, action and financial support.

Speakers from OMF and TearFund have given insight into their work 'in the field'. The work of Mercy Ships was highlighted with the showing of their video at Men's Breakfast and Coffee Break. Members continue to support the work of CMS around the world. A cake sale organised by Nicholas for the TearFund Toilet Twinning initiative raised enough to pay for 4 toilets to be provided for poor households in Africa and the certificate is on display in the appropriate room!



Mission work in this country is supported in prayer and finance through our link with CPAS, who are our Patrons. Practical outreach nearer home has been supported through Harvest and Christmas gifts sent to Gatehouse in Bury St Edmunds and weekly gifts of food items to the Stowmarket Food Bank. Good contacts have been developed with the Primary School through Discover Advent presented by a team from the Cathedral and by the Carol Service held in the church. Families are also reached through Messy Church sessions which began during August and are continuing to be well attended and enjoyed. A group of members from St John's and the Baptist Church also visit the school regularly to 'Open the Book' with great effect.

In addition to these mission activities, individual members support a number of mission projects and share news in various groups.

Catherine Joughin

19. Foodbank

Stowmarket Foodbank supports families and individuals going through financial crises by supplying emergency food parcels. They rely entirely on donations of food and money from the public through local churches and collection points in supermarkets.



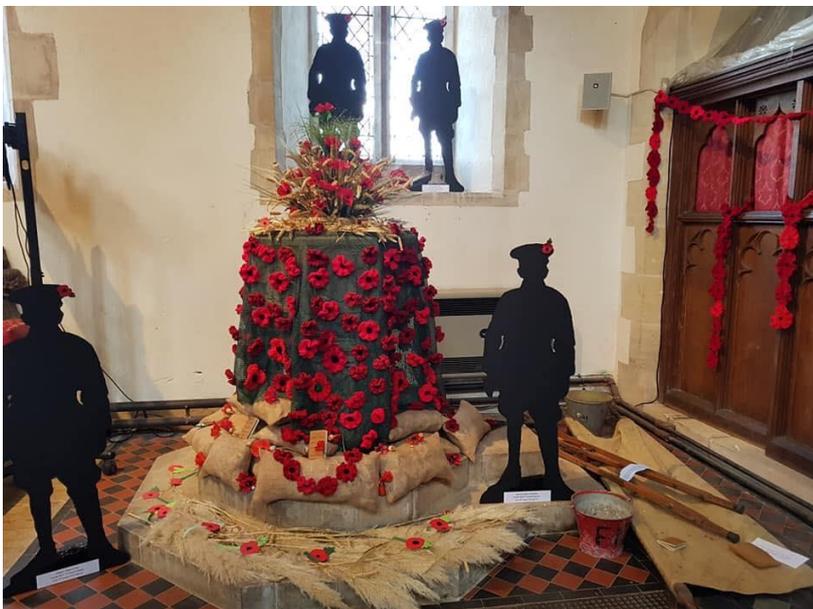
Thank you to all you who place donations in the box at the back of church each week. Volunteers from the Foodbank collect from The Rectory every other Tuesday morning and are very appreciative of our support.

Lisa Goodridge

20. Poppy Festival commemorating the Centenary of the end of W.W.I

After a lot of discussion and planning between "Companions" and The Friends of St. John's at the end of 2017, it was decided to ask as many ladies who could knit if they would be willing to knit poppies for this Festival and we had a huge response even from Australia which carried on until the end of October '18

In the meantime, Linda and I went to see Jonathan Noy of "Eastern Frames" to enquire as to whether he could design a cut-out figure of a W.W.I. soldier. He went better than that as he generously donated the superb black silhouette figures of the soldiers and a sailor from Elmswell who sadly did not return; these figures were individually named and placed around the Church.



The setting up took place on Monday 5th November and included the trenches and medical station, large drapes of poppies hung from the balcony and front door and various other displays. The Sanctuary was a purple poppy memorial to all the animals especially horses and pigeons who played a big part in the war together with a drumhead altar decorated with a Minden Rose wreath of the Suffolk Regiment.

Children from Elmswell School visited the Church on the Tuesday and Thursday morning and enjoyed a mini history lesson with question/answer sheets. The Tuesday children on return to School actually made a huge cross adorned with poppies and messages of what they had learned from their visit and the Thursday children brought it to be part of the Festival.

The event was open from the Tuesday until after the Service of Remembrance on the Sunday.

Brenda Begg and Linda Waspe

21. Lavenham Deanery Synod Report 2018

The Lavenham Deanery Synod has met 3 times in 2018. Benefice reports were received from St Edmund Way (February), Rougham (June) and Cockfield benefice (September).

In February there was no 'outside' speaker, Rev Tiffer Robinson updated us about the work of the General Synod and there was a short presentation on the looming GDPR regulations.

In June we had talks from the Refugee Community Sponsorship Scheme with speakers from the home office and local authorities. This was very interesting and much discussion arose with Rattlesden benefice pursuing the ideas.

In September we heard from Malcolm Gifford spoke about Global Hope Network International, a global charity that deals with child labour, poverty, and illiteracy. We were told about the difficulties of working in an underserved area.

Finance: Howard Webb the Deanery Organiser reported at each meeting. Centenary Share payments were still falling short across the diocese but the Lavenham Deanery was still able to meet most of the share requested, although year on year the deficit is growing.

Peter Rutt (Deanery Secretary)