

THE BENEFICES OF STALHAM AND SMALLBURGH

comprising the parishes of

- Ingham, Stalham (including Brunstead and East Ruston), and Sutton
- Dilham, Honing with Crostwight, and Smallburgh

BENEFICES PROFILE 2025



Safeguarding

Stalham and Smallburgh Benefices have a commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Children, Young People, and Vulnerable Adults. Safeguarding policies are displayed in each church porch and they and the procedure are issued to each PCC member and a copy is held accessibly in each church building.

We take the safety of everyone within the Church very seriously and expect everyone to work within its safeguarding policies and procedures and to take due note of the diocesan 'Safer recruitment policy'.

We seek to treat all comers with respect, recognising their own abilities, choices and right to confidentiality. We aim to ensure a safe and welcoming environment which is inclusive, supportive and positive.

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Cover image: **Stalham, looking north-north-west towards the sea.** © Mike Page at <https://www.mike-page.co.uk/>

INTRODUCTION

This Profile has been compiled and agreed jointly by the Benefices of Stalham and Smallburgh. Each benefice (and its individual parishes) has, however, produced its own description and statement of needs, and has done so in its own way and in its own voice. We are, though, united in our need of pastoral leadership. So we look forward to welcoming into our community a new Rector who will take us forward through the spiritual journey of our lives, bringing more of our local populations to joyful knowledge of Jesus Christ.

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The Parochial Church Councils of

- Dilham
- Honing with Crostwight
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- Smallburgh
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- Sutton

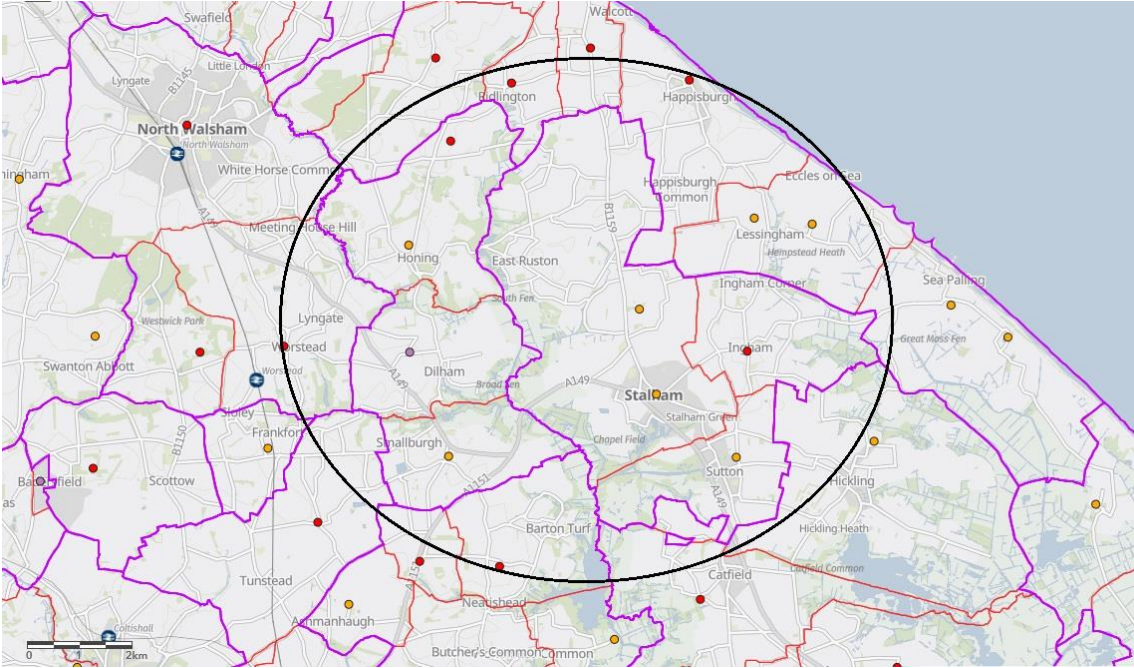
January 2025

1: OVERVIEW OF THE TWO BENEFICES

Where we are



The benefices within the Diocese of Norwich.



Boundaries of the benefices (purple) and parishes (red).

Source for both maps: Church of England Commissioners, available at <https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=67bce0ed36dd4ee0af7a16bc079aa09a> (accessed 13 December 2024)

Why we are here

Our two benefices exist to spread the Word of God, making the Church and God's mission accessible to all who live in our communities, to seed and nurture their faith, to provide them with comfort and succour when they need and request it, to express in worship our own love of God and by doing so to reveal His love for our neighbours and for all people.

What we are looking for

We are looking for a new Rector, following the recent resignation of the previous incumbent, to provide us with the help and leadership that will allow our benefices to thrive.

We want someone with enthusiasm for bringing the gospel message alive, sharing the good news within our communities and enabling the members of our churches to feel empowered to share their faith in Christ.

We need someone who understands the challenges of rural ministry, the joys that this can bring and the sense of community that can be established through parish life.

In return we will do our best to support and encourage our Rector in the joint venture of refreshing the Church's role and meaning in this part of Norfolk, anchoring God in our community.

The two benefices

Our two benefices were entirely separate until 2015, when the retirement of the Rector of Smallburgh led to the Rector of Stalham accepting the vacant incumbency, the benefices to be held in plurality. They lie in the north-east of Norfolk, at the top of the Broads, a short distance from the sea at Happisburgh and with easy access to Norwich. Between them the two benefices extend roughly seven miles east to west and five miles north to south. The populations of the six parishes are not large: only Stalham and Sutton have more than a thousand inhabitants. The other parishes each have around 300 inhabitants.

Both benefices have separate and distinctive identities, reflecting their histories as well as their geographical and demographic characteristics. The Smallburgh Benefice comprises the three village parishes of Dilham, Honing with Crostwight, and Smallburgh, set in an agricultural landscape, while the Stalham Benefice, centred on the small but growing town of Stalham, includes the two nearby village parishes of Ingham and Sutton. The two villages of East Ruston and Brunstead are also included within the Stalham Parish.

How we work together

Our two benefices come together for joint services from time to time and are very alert to the opportunities that co-operation can bring. While we generally live self-sufficient lives, serving our local communities, we nevertheless look for synergies where they are available and believed to be beneficial. Our friendly co-existence recognises that sharing a Rector requires mutual generosity of spirit and a lot of realism. We are, though, blessed with a shared Ministry Team which provides excellent support. This is one of our greatest strengths and is evident in the love and mutual respect that we have for one another, particularly when we come together to worship in Holy Communion. We believe that with careful organisation and the best use of our human and physical resources, much can be achieved in the coming years.

Our organisation and Ministry Team

The two benefices share a single Ministry Team. At present the Team consists of

- The Reverend Andrew Bevan, Assistant Priest – SSM in full-time secular employment
- The Reverend Richard Jackson, retired with PTO
- The Reverend Sue Egerton, retired with PTO
- Three Licensed Lay Ministers: Betty Lacey, Mary Shepherd and Martyn Egerton (all with PTO).
- Four Authorised Worship Assistants: Mavis Smith and David Nichols (Stalham), and June Cutting and Geoffrey Dixon (Smallburgh)
- A number of lay members assist with the communion. Lay members also assist with the distribution of communion to the sick, elderly or infirm in their homes.

The parishes in the Stalham Benefice normally have one Sunday service a week each, while those in the Smallburgh Benefice share a service among them. Further information about the patterns of services can be found later in this Profile.

What we are looking for together

Our two benefices hope, together in common, that our new Rector will

- see an important function being to lead and help the congregations (and others) in their spiritual journey through life, from birth to death;
- be a mission-focused minister who is keen to promote and lead the Church's engagement with community activities and organisations;
- have a working knowledge of ways of developing effective relationships with all age groups, and to this end will wish to work with both the younger and older members of our community, in fresh ways which will engage people in the Gospel;

- value the opportunities presented by rural ministry to build Christian fellowship in our parishes;
- wish to work ecumenically with the various denominations in our benefices;
- be comfortable and confident leading worship using both modern and traditional liturgies (Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer) within a mainstream Anglican culture;
- have personal experience of working collegially with a team of ordained and lay colleagues and supporting and encouraging all its members;
- be personable and approachable.

What we can offer together

- opportunities to engage local communities with a revived Christian message;
- a peaceful and pleasant part of the country in which to live and work;
- good schools for all ages;
- full commitment to the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing;
- an experienced, enthusiastic and dedicated Ministry Team that is looking forward to the leadership and opportunities that a new Rector can bring;
- a dedicated team of churchwardens who love their parishes and serve them faithfully;
- effective administrative and ministry support, including possible volunteer administrative help if requested;
- a harmonious working relationship between the two benefices;
- the opportunity to work in a supportive, forward-looking diocese full of interesting challenges.



© Fiona Williams

The Rectory

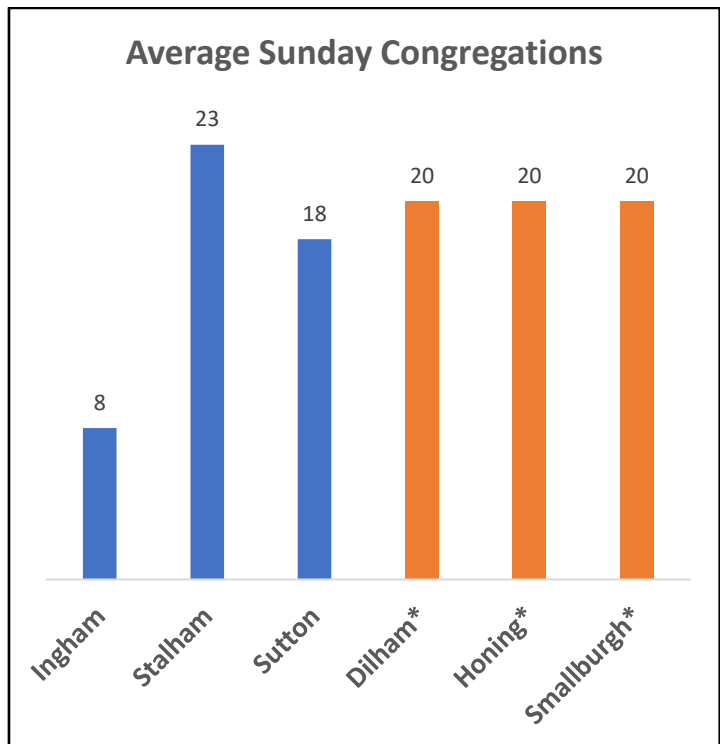
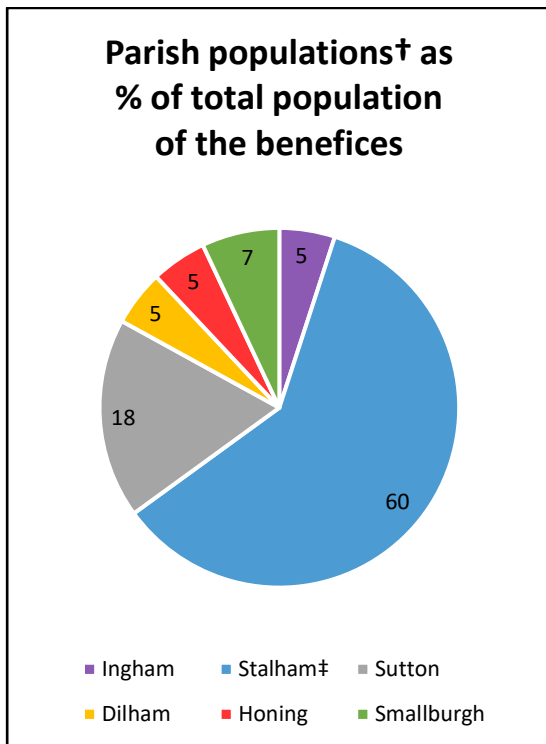
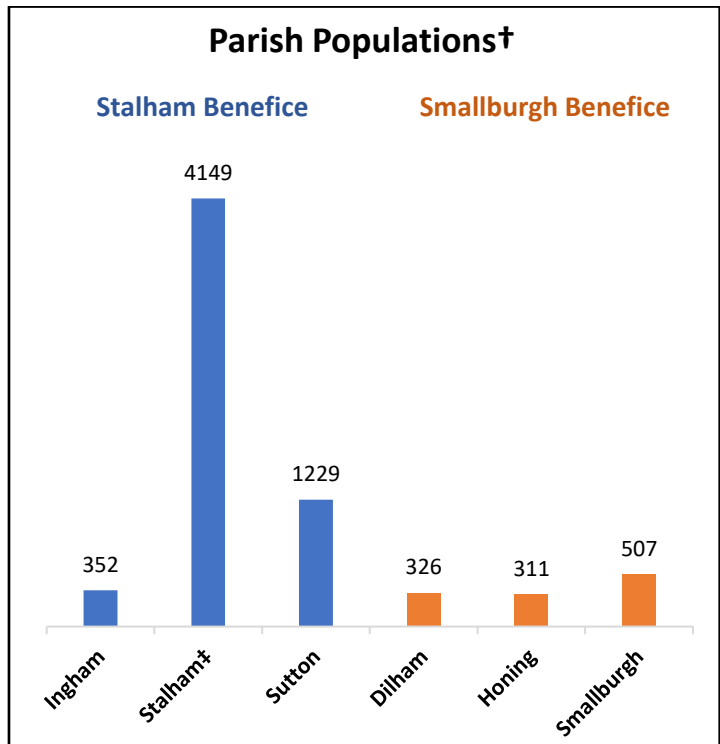
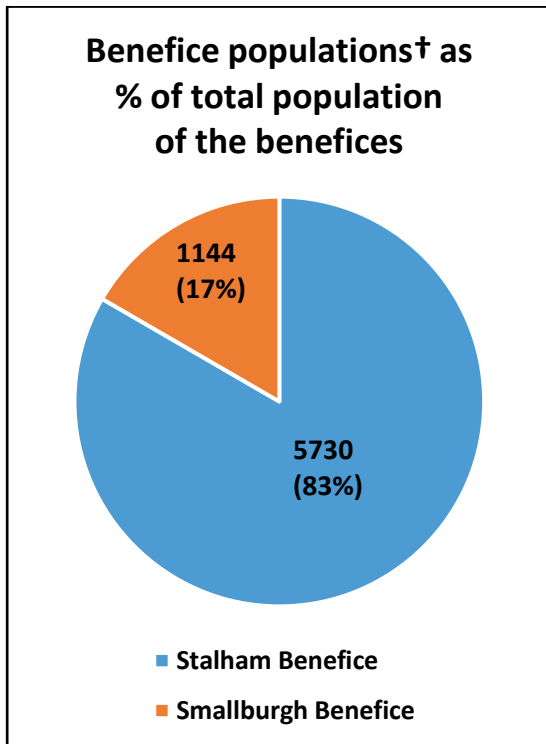
The benefice Rectory was built in 1983 and is about 200 metres from St Mary's, Stalham. It is a large four-bedroomed house with an additional guest/storage room built under the eaves. There is a separate public area of the house with a large study/office and accessible toilet. To the rear of the house are two reception rooms. The ample kitchen has been recently refitted, and has a utility room leading from it. There is a large single garage which can be accessed from inside the house. The house has been recently recarpeted, and has new flooring in the bathrooms, kitchen and utility room.

At the back are gardens of lawn and trees, with patio and shed. To the front is a drive with some lawn and trees and plenty of parking space. The Rectory has full oil-fired central heating, and is very well insulated.



The Rectory, Camping Field Lane, Stalham. © Peter Williams

Populations and congregations



† Population data are derived from the 2021 Census, as reported on The Church of England parish dashboards (source: Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence) available at <https://parishreturns.churchofengland.org/census-dashboards/> (accessed 28 November 2024).

‡ The ecclesiastical parish of Stalham includes the civil parishes of Brunstead and East Ruston.

*Congregations are drawn from the whole benefice.

2: THE STALHAM BENEFICE

Introduction

The Stalham Benefice (population c. 5730) comprises the three parishes of Stalham, Sutton, and Ingham, and also the outlying villages of East Ruston and Brunstead. It is situated close to the Norfolk Broads, about 15 miles from the ancient cathedral city of Norwich and the resort of Great Yarmouth. The coastline, with its long stretches of beach and seal colonies, is just a few miles away. The broads and rivers, with their wildlife and conservation areas, appeal to a variety of tourists and the benefice adjoins them.

Stalham is a small market town, and Sutton, Ingham, East Ruston and Brunstead are surrounding villages set in an agricultural environment. (For parish population sizes see page 9.) The main industries across the benefice are agriculture and tourism, though Stalham does support some light industry and commerce.

Schools and family

Stalham, Sutton and East Ruston between them provide infant schools (ages 4-7) and there are junior (ages 7-11) and high schools in Stalham. All the schools are highly regarded and very much seen as part of the community. Sutton Infant Academy is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled School. Good links and relationships exist between the benefice and all the schools. There are many benefits of raising children in this rural environment: wildlife is everywhere, on the Broads and by the coast; our communities are welcoming and mutually supportive; and there is little anti-social behaviour.

Road and rail connections

There are good road links to the nearby centres of Wroxham and North Walsham. Trains from Wroxham and North Walsham run to Norwich and Cromer every hour with frequent onward connections from Norwich to London (under two hours), Cambridge (approx. one hour), the Midlands and North-west. Buses offer services to Norwich and Great Yarmouth via the surrounding villages and services to Cromer via North Walsham. The A11 and A47 are the major road arteries linking into the national motorway system.

Benefice history and church buildings

The benefice covers an area of about 20 square miles and was formed through a Pastoral Measure in November 2000. The three parishes had been working together for some time prior to this, and generally do so very well, though of course there are always areas where Church and community links between the parishes could be strengthened.

All three churches are Grade 1 or Grade 2* listed buildings. St Mary's East Ruston is redundant and cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust, though its churchyard remains open and is the responsibility of Stalham PCC. Brunstead church is cared for by the Norwich Diocesan Churches Trust and has three services a year.



A beautiful rural benefice (Ingham church).

Services and church tradition

There is a range of service styles within the parishes and our Church tradition can be considered 'central' in general, with vestments being worn at the Eucharist. A team of servers assists at the Eucharist. Lay participation plays an important part in our worship. Also, pre Covid-19, occasional informal worship was conducted in East Ruston village hall. A weekly 'Pews News' is produced. The benefice also holds Home Groups in Lent and at other times as arranged.

The Patrons are the Bishop of Norwich and the Diocesan Board of Patronage.

Other places of worship

Within the benefice, there is also an active Baptist Church and, more recently, an Orthodox Church which has bought and redeveloped the town's old police station. The Roman Catholic Church is based in nearby North Walsham and Hoveton. The Roman Catholic Church holds an annual mass in St Mary's, to which all are invited.

Descriptions of each of the three parishes, provided by their PCCs, are appended at the end of the Profile.



Stalham Benefice barbecue 2024.

3: THE SMALLBURGH BENEFICE

Introduction

The Smallburgh Benefice (population c. 1,144) lies to the west of Stalham, at one side of the Norfolk Broads. It is made up of three separate parishes of roughly equal size: Honing with Crostwight, Dilham, and Smallburgh, running north to south. It is productive agricultural country. For several decades, from the union of the parishes until 2015, the benefice had its own Rector, with a rectory in Honing. Each parish is centred round a small village with limited social facilities; Smallburgh and Dilham each have a pub, and all three villages have busy village halls. There are no shops, post offices or other services (except for a mobile Post Office in Smallburgh twice a week and a visit to each village once every four weeks from the travelling library). Primary schools are in adjacent parishes, and the nearest secondary schools are in North Walsham and Stalham. In all three villages the church takes a prominent role in community activities, with village weekends, talks, exhibitions and displays – all with tea and cake!



An agricultural benefice: annual vintage ploughing event. © William Cubitt

Although organised as three parishes, the benefice functions in many ways as a single unit. There is just one service each Sunday, alternating between Holy Communion and Morning Prayer and rotating among the parishes on a three-weekly cycle. This removes the need for clergy to be present in every church each week. There are also occasional joint services with the Stalham Benefice. The Book of Common Prayer has a regular and honoured place in the service schedule, although Common Worship is mostly used. Refreshments follow the services.

The benefice has one lay minister, Mrs Betty Lacey, and two Authorised Worship Assistants; it relies on clergy from the Ministry Team, based in Stalham, to preside at the fortnightly Holy Communion services. Otherwise the services have been organised and run from within the benefice. There are no church groups or provision for children at present and, apart from Sunday services, baptisms, weddings and funerals, the church buildings themselves are used only for occasional fundraising events.

Parish co-operation

The churches work harmoniously together: we attend each others' social events (e.g. Twelfth Night and Summer Parties, Bring and Share lunches etc) and respect one another's traditions and preferences. While the churches largely manage themselves on a day-to-day basis through their churchwardens and PCCs, there are collective activities such as the monthly 'Good News' newsletter, and meetings to agree (for example) the location and format of festival services and to deal with matters requiring a benefice response. There is a separate benefice Treasurer and bank account and each parish contributes to the shared expenses. The churchwardens and the local lay ministry team help each other and have started to meet to discuss matters of mutual interest.



A friendly and cheerful benefice. © William Cubitt

Congregation

In common with many rural parishes, the age profile of our congregation tends towards the upper deciles: children are rarely seen in church on Sundays. In effect we have a single peripatetic congregation, and we normally expect to see between 15 and 25 people at our service each week. Some people will only attend their local church, but others visit all of them regularly and our congregation numbers have remained reasonably steady in recent years.

We are also very fortunate to have an organist, and an organ (or harmonium) in every church although, alas, no choir at present.

Opportunities

From the preceding description it might be assumed that the benefice is largely self-sufficient and, for the most part, that would be true. It is equally true, however, that we are hoping that a new Rector will be able – and will wish – to provide enhanced spiritual and pastoral leadership within our parishes. So we are looking for someone who will include Smallburgh as part of their overall vision of the Rector’s role and not just a benefice which is supported at a distance. In particular, we feel that young people are not provided for and deserve better. There is a significant number of youngsters aged up to 17 (believed to be about 160 in the whole benefice), whom we will probably only see once a year at the Crib or Christingle services, if at all. We would also welcome a slightly more formal approach to the general oversight of the benefice, with a re-institution of the Benefice Council, which has fallen into disuse in recent years.

Vision

An incumbent coming to these two benefices will discover that Smallburgh has a strong local identity, which it values highly and wishes to preserve, and that while it recognises that it is much smaller than its friends and neighbours at Stalham, the time is right to look at its mission afresh: we hope to find a Rector to help build new relationships with the community. The benefice has the desire and potential, with imaginative leadership, to refocus its vision, grow the Church and provide a bright beacon of faith for its village communities in this lovely corner of north-east Norfolk.



A beacon of faith: Honing, Christmas 2024. © Fiona Williams

The joint Patrons of the benefice are the Bishop of Norwich, Dr Geoffrey Cubitt and J C Wickham Esq.

Descriptions of each of the three parishes, provided by their PCCs, are at the end of this Profile.

4: CONCLUSION

The incoming Rector of our two benefices will be faced with the usual opportunities and challenges that face every incumbent in a rural setting. It will be hard work and will need a strong belief in the power of the Holy Spirit. But the task is infinitely worthwhile; our congregations, though small, are willing and able, and our volunteers are committed to maintaining and growing the Church in this endlessly interesting part of Norfolk. They need to be supported and nurtured.

We hope that this Profile of our benefices provides a snapshot into the lives of some of the Christian people of Stalham and Smallburgh. We also hope that it will encourage candidates to apply for the position who would like to help strengthen these two communities and see the result of their labours translated into joyful, fulfilled and resilient Church- and Christ-loving bodies of people.

APPENDIX

PARISH DESCRIPTIONS



Stalham Benefice: The Parish of the Priory Church of The Holy Trinity, Ingham



Holy Trinity, Ingham. © Angela Schroeer.

The sprawling village of Ingham, population 352 at the last Census, is in an area between The Norfolk Broads and the sea. Ingham centre was, in the past, the church, the Swan Inn, the village shop and Ingham School. The school and shop are gone now and the Swan Inn is a ‘fine dining’ inn.

As with many villages there are increasing numbers of converted farm buildings, second homes and/or holiday lets. It is difficult for young people who grew up in the village to afford the house prices. The few children in the village travel daily into Stalham for school or go to other adjacent villages where there are still small village schools. The majority of older children attend Stalham secondary academy. A few go on to private schools in Holt, Aylsham or Lessingham.

Holy Trinity is recognised as a living church, a place of celebration at times of joy and sorrow in village life. The church, as in many small communities, is the only recognised place providing spiritual support to those struggling with loss.

There is a service every Sunday and the service pattern is: 1st and 3rd Sundays in the month, Holy Communion; 2nd and 4th Sundays in the month, Morning prayer. When there is a 5th Sunday in a month, a benefice service is held in one of the benefice churches, in rotation.

Services are traditional 'middle of the road' C of E. Our usual books are Common Worship and Hymns Old and New. We only occasionally have an organist and accompany Hymns with an iPod with music from 'No organist No problem'.

We do periodically house large weddings and funerals, seating up to 200 people. A local special school also comes to the church for an end of year service and prize giving.

The church reaches out to the local population, greeting any who move to the village with a welcome gift parcel. The church organises the yearly village fete which not only raises funds but fosters a sense of community. In 2024 the carol service had 49 people attending. The after-service Viennese Punch is amazing (by the way).

Holy Trinity is open daily, year-round, from 9 am until dusk for private prayer and for visitors. Being in a holiday area on a road to the seaside resort of Sea Palling we have many visitors who stop by to visit such a large church. In the holiday season we provide a hospitality table. Engaging visitors in the history of the church sometimes results in them joining us for Sunday service.

The church has two bells. We joined in 'Ring for the King' for an hour on Coronation Day for King Charles. Residents, both church and non-church, rang for a few minutes each and said it felt like marking history.



Ring for the King, Ingham, 6 May 2023.

It is an Ingham paradox, and will be a challenge for an incumbent, to get more people to regularly worship than work in the church willingly on occasional Children's Days, on church duties in the week (such as cleaning and flower arranging) and helping to run the annual fete.



Ingham church fete.

The Friends of Ingham Church operates under the umbrella of the PCC. It reaches out to those who are interested in the history and architectural beauty of the building and wish to help to support the upkeep of the fabric.

The last complete year for which we have statistics is 2023. These show 18 people on the Electoral Roll, 13 people in the worshipping community and an average attendance to worship of eight. Though the absolute number attending services appears small, it is more than twice the national average for our target population.

We have four PCC members, who make up in enthusiasm and sheer hard work for the small number of those worshipping. We have paid our Parish Share in full for the last three years.

The Priory Church is Grade 1 Listed. It is the only remaining church of the Trinitarian order in the country, having been rebuilt by one of the founding Knights of the Garter in 1360, who is buried here. It contains two splendid tombs. One is of Sir Oliver de Ingham, seneschal of Aquitaine at the start of the 100 Years War. The other, of Sir Roger de Boys (died c. 1395) has been described as one of the 10 finest in the country of its age.

There is a busy well-run and lively Village Hall close by, offering clubs and various activities. The church has a good working relationship with the hall.

We have links with the Merchant Navy Association whose training School was here in the Ingham Old Hall from 1943 until 1952.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust are supportive and part of the churchyard is a conservation area. We have also had links with English Heritage through their Grant Aid and Norfolk Churches Trust. We have not yet managed to raise funds to instal a toilet and the refreshment area needs some modernisation. Improved amenities would enable us to offer concerts and exhibitions.

We recognise that many of the functions being explored by churches to promote multifunctionality cannot work in our small village. The national importance of the church buildings may, though, be used to fulfil this role.

We would wish to develop links with wildlife organisations given the bat colony in the church.

We are looking to use technology to help us with these endeavours and to maximise the efficiency of those involved with church life, releasing time for mission and development. Although engagement with the local population is good, we look to improve outreach and spreading the Christian message.

The Village, church and non-church, looks forward to welcoming a new Rector to lead, teach and guide us.

Stalham Benefice: The Parish of St Mary , Stalham



St Mary the Virgin, Stalham. © Fiona Williams

St Mary's is in the heart of Stalham in a prominent position on the High Street. The church building is open every day, and attracts many visitors from the town as well as tourists. Sunday morning services have a usual congregation of between 15-30, and most of the congregation is over the age of 65. There are 45 members on the electoral roll. Sunday worship alternates between Holy Communion and Morning Prayer (Common Worship), and on the fifth Sunday of the month we have a joint benefices service which moves around the churches of the Stalham and Smallburgh Benefices. Our singing is usually accompanied by recorded music, although for large services and special occasions the organ and/or piano may be used.

The church has a good relationship with other local churches ecumenically and in the deanery, especially Stalham Baptist Church, with whom we run Messy Church once a month and hold a combined shoebox service each November. Members from local churches and the wider community are usually involved in 'town' services such as at Remembrance and the Christmas Carol Service. We are keen to involve the local community and work with the local business forum in the 'Street Fairs' which take place several times a year on the High Street. The Town Council and Business Forum are very supportive of the church. St Mary's hosts community organised events such as school harvest festivals and carol services, concerts, and for the first time in 2024 the Stalham and Smallburgh beer festival.

Currently there are nine members of the PCC, and one churchwarden. There are several new members on the PCC, and we have been working on rebuilding relationships after a tricky patch. We have put in place a PCC covenant and had an away day to think about how we work together, and we are in a good, healthy place going forward. We struggled to pay Parish Share during Covid, but are committed to building back up to paying in full and have made good progress with that aim this year. The PCC also has responsibility for the villages of East Ruston and Brunstead.

There are many events held by the church throughout the year, helping us to raise funds and, importantly, build relationships and reach out to the community. At the heart of these are our weekly coffee mornings; we have also held fetes, exhibitions, afternoon teas, flowers festivals, beetle drives, and our annual Christmas Tree Festival, which is a key event in the town. We recognise the need to build on these relationships and help visitors to feel more involved in church and parish life. We need our new Rector to look afresh at our events and build upon them to make them more accessible and improve the opportunities for mission.



Christmas Tree Festival, St Mary, Stalham.

The church building is grade 2* listed, just over 600 years old and much treasured by the local community. There are many blessings associated with such an ancient church, but of course there are many challenges too; the porch is currently undergoing repair work after the flint fascia became unstable. We are in the process of setting up a 'Friends of St Mary's' group to tap into the goodwill in the town towards keeping the building in good repair. The next quinquennial inspection is due in 2025. There are two closed churchyards, which are very well maintained by the Town Council. We have church rooms in one of the churchyards, which are unfortunately out of use as they are in need of renovation; we are working with diocesan support to consider what might be the best way forward. In the past the church rooms were used for church activities, and let out to community groups.

St Mary's is a warm, inclusive community of Christian fellowship, with a talented team of lay and ordained ministers, and a committed PCC. We are a friendly bunch, with a ready pool of volunteers, cake bakers and tea makers for church and community events. We have established connections with the town's schools, who come into church for services and lessons, as well as ministers going into school for assemblies. People come in and out of the church every day; some stay just for a few moments, others become part of the life of the church, and all are welcome.



Norfolk Wherry Brass at the Remembrance Sunday service.

We are hoping that our new Rector will be:

- a mission-focused minister who is keen to build on existing community relationships to demonstrate the role of Christ beyond the church door, particularly reaching out to those who may not have regular contact with the church;
- a minister who recognises the importance of lay ministry and who is willing to develop and encourage our congregations in the service of Christ. We are all part of the body of Christ, and we are all called to serve in different ways: rural ministry cannot be a one-person show;
- someone who values rural ministry, recognising the challenges and opportunities which come with serving communities over a large geographical area.



Stalham Beer Festival 2024

Stalham Benefice: The Parish of St Michael and All Angels, Sutton



St Michael and All Angels, Sutton. © Fiona Williams

The medieval parish church of Sutton is situated away from the village centre on Church Road, which runs parallel to The Street, the main road through the village. There has been a church here since the early Saxon period, but the present building dates to the late 12th century, with the addition of a large 14th century west tower.

Very few alterations have been made to the church's exterior since then, and despite the Victorian restoration, St Michael's has been remarkably unchanged since the medieval period. That said, the PCC, together with the Friends of St. Michael's Church, have been fund-raising to build a kitchen in the tower and an extension housing a toilet and vestry, which was finished and dedicated in 2023.

We are a small congregation at Sutton (23 on the electoral roll and an average of 16-20 souls at services), whose members work extremely well together, very much focused on keeping our little church building open and available to everyone in our parish. The PCC is a cooperative and harmonious body, even if members may occasionally vary in their views, feeling it essential to hear and ponder others' ideas. In general it has a receptive attitude to new ideas, especially if they will bring new people into the Church. It has seven elected lay members and normally meets six times a year. We have a pop-up café on the first Friday in the month and a pop-in and play for very tiny people with their mums every fortnight. We should like our incumbent to be outgoing, with a flexible mind-set, who would accept - at least initially - the very good arrangements we have at the moment. This does not mean

we would be against measured change, achieved through consensus agreement with the PCC. Certainly we feel that a good sense of humour will be an essential quality of our new incumbent.



Sunday morning worship at Sutton, January 2025. © Malcolm Flatman

The parish's finances are normally in balance, with the Parish Share being easily the largest item of expenditure. In recent years we have paid the Share in full, although it has been hard and sometimes quite laborious so to do. The parish raises funds willingly (if a trifle wearily at times). At the moment we have other ideas of improving the facilities in our church, but we need to carry on – with the help of the Friends of the Church - raising money to get everything on the Quinquennial report completed first... this is a priority at the moment.

We are part of a multi-parish benefice and look forward to our united services which are held alternately around the benefice when there is a fifth Sunday in the month. The parishes work well together, helping each other when need arises. We also welcome the Smallburgh Benefice on occasion, enjoying the fellowship we share together. Overall, we feel that we are part of an homogenous group of parishes with much in common, and our similarities far outweigh our differences.



The new vestry and lavatory extension at St Michael and All Angels. © Malcolm Flatman

Smallburgh Benefice: The Parish of St Nicholas, Dilham

The village of Dilham which lies approximately ½ mile to the south east of the church, has a population of 331 (2021 Census), and is situated at the upper reaches of the Norfolk Broads. Dilham staithe is the northern limit of navigation on the Broads network. The village lies just off the main A149, which is served by a regular bus service to North Walsham, Stalham, Great Yarmouth and Norwich. The Cross Keys public house lies in the centre of the village, as do the village hall and playing field. The village hall committee and PCC organise a range of social activities throughout the year that are enjoyed by churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike. Regular film shows are held in the village hall and it is the venue for the Smallburgh & District Women's Institute meetings. The Worstead Weavers are based in the village and meet in their own building adjacent to the village hall.



St Nicholas, Dilham. © Fiona Williams

St Nicholas' Church is the 4th on the site and was built in 1930. It is one of the last works by architect Cecil Greenwood Hare. Hare created a dignified church of flint and Clipsham stone with a single cell nave, chancel and south porch. To the north of the chancel are clergy and choir vestries, the latter now used as a Lady Chapel. The building's crowning glory is the single hammerbeam roof which even fooled Pevsner into thinking it contained old materials. In earlier times it had a high church tradition and there is still evidence of this in some of the church's furnishings, for example the stations of the cross and an aumbry. The vestry houses a full set of vestments.

The building is open at all times and is in a good state of repair. The churchyard has been surveyed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and their recommendations for maintenance followed

by a small group of volunteers. There are 12 names on the church's electoral roll and eight members of the PCC, which meets four times per year. We use Common Worship for all our services.



Good Friday procession, Dilham. © Barry Furness

Our finances are reasonably sound, and we have always been able to pay our Parish Share in full. Along with the other parishes in the benefice, we are hoping that our Rector will take a real interest in our spiritual wellbeing and offer us pastoral support and leadership, which we will gratefully receive.



Dilham Twelfth Night party for the benefice, January 2025. © Iain Warner

Smallburgh Benefice: The Parish of St Peter and St Paul, Honing, with All Saints, Crostwight

The once-separate parishes of Honing and Crostwight, long a single incumbency, were united in 1996 into the Parish of Honing with Crostwight. We therefore have two parish churches, St Peter and St Paul standing prominently on the edge of Honing village, and All Saints, isolated in fields in the north of the parish, about a mile away, in the former parish of Crostwight. Ours is the most northerly of the three parishes in the Smallburgh Benefice.



St Peter and St Paul, Honing. © Fiona Williams

At the 2021 census the parish had a population of 311. Over 80% of parishioners live in the village itself and the remainder in the surrounding countryside. It is a predominantly agricultural parish, though there are several small enterprises in and around it; Honing church and the village hall (with its weekly social club) are now the only remaining community facilities. The village website (<https://honingvillage.wordpress.com/>) is a good source of information. For shops and services it looks mainly to North Walsham and also to Stalham; Norwich is, of course, the local urban centre.



All Saints, Crostwight. © Fiona Williams

There are 28 names on the electoral roll and the PCC has eight elected lay members. A service is held in one of the two churches every three weeks: between Mothering Sunday and All Saints' Day the services alternate between Honing and Crostwight. As the latter has no heating or electricity, there are no Crostwight services in winter, apart from a candlelit carol service at Christmas. There are a number of young people in the parish, but none of them comes to our services, except for the annual candlelit Christmas Eve Crib Service at Honing, when the church is full.



Christmas Eve Crib Service, Honing, 2024. © Fiona Williams

The churches are open all day, every day. Both of them are greatly valued by the parishioners, many of whom take a personal interest in them even if they don't attend services. The two churches are, in their different ways, both remarkable. Honing, grade 2*, is a medieval church that was extensively remodelled in 1795. In 2016 it was repaired and given a new roof, drainage and heating with the aid of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. It is now in good repair and we are planning the installation of a kitchen and lavatory in the church.

Crostwight church (All Saints') is listed Grade I. It is approximately 700 years old, and retains many medieval features, including a nationally-significant series of late 14th century wall paintings. The deteriorating state of the paintings has caused the church to be placed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, but a successful £50,000 fundraising campaign allowed the most vulnerable sections to be conserved in 2022. In addition, All Saints' most recent (2021) Quinquennial Inspection Report identified some serious structural defects in the fabric of the building. Repairs to the building and conservation of the rest of the wall paintings are now forming a separate project, for which the PCC is seeking £350,000 funding. The project is being managed by a committee of PCC members, in co-operation with a conservation architect and an accredited wall paintings conservator.



Talk on the Crostwight wall paintings. © Lucy Cubitt

All the services at Honing church use Common Worship, while those at Crostwight use only the Book of Common Prayer. This combination of ancient and modern liturgies is appreciated by the congregation. Fundraising events are well-supported and there is usually no shortage of people wanting to help with their organisation.

The PCC meets four times a year, alternately with its Standing Committee. We have two churchwardens who are fully committed to their roles. While not a wealthy parish, our finances are managed prudently and the Parish Share has always been paid in full. There are two restricted fabric funds, one for Honing and the other for Crostwight. In normal years we undertake a programme of fundraising events, such as talks, landscape walks, and tractor rides along a remarkable mile of daffodils, which usually generate enough to keep the General Fund in the black.



Blessing the tractor, Honing Village Weekend. © William Cubitt

Both churches participate in the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Churchyard Conservation Scheme.



Churchyard maintenance: volunteer working party, Honing. © Fiona Williams

Our relations with the other parishes in the benefice are excellent, reflecting the respect we all have for our separate identities, while recognising the synergy and mutual interdependency we also enjoy.

We hope that our new Rector will want to engage with us as a congregation and as individuals, taking an interest in our collective development as a Church community and leading us through our spiritual lives.

Smallburgh Benefice: The Parish of St Peter, Smallburgh

Smallburgh is a rather scattered village presenting a peaceful agricultural landscape intersected by two very busy roads. It has a population of 507 (2021 figure) and a happy balance of ages. It is a busy village and enjoys the facilities of a playing field, with space for football, tennis and bowls, a busy village hall, a public house, a garage, mobile Post Office and bus services.

Smallburgh's church is reasonably central. It is a largely early 15th century structure, compact and of flint construction, with a slate roof and a bell-cote instead of a tower. It is in very good condition. The churchyard is bordered by trees and, with a recent gift of land, has provision for many years to come. The active PCC organises cleaning and care of our church and churchyard.



St Peter, Smallburgh. © Fiona Williams

There are 15 names on the church's electoral roll. The PCC has six elected lay members and meets four times each year. We use Common Worship for our Holy Communion services and the Book of Common Prayer at Morning Prayer.

We are fortunate in having a modest financial endowment and a small amount of land that is leased, which means that our finances are at present sound and we have always been able to pay our Parish Share in full.

We work well with the other two parishes in the benefice, sharing the monthly newsletter 'Good News' as well as helping each other in whatever way we can and is needed.



Harvest Bring and Share lunch, Smallburgh village hall.



Palm Sunday procession, Smallburgh.

We are looking forward to welcoming a new Rector who can take a lead in providing pastoral support to all in our parish and benefice.