

**Saxmundham URC Local Ministry & Mission Review for 2012 – 2017 Revised 07/17**

**Our Church in Saxmundham**

Saxmundham URC has a congregation of between 10-15 committed members and adherents who attend worship on a Sunday. The church is self-reliant, running a holiday club for young children, a variety of community social events, worship at a care home, regular film shows and local pastoral care to the friends of the church. Where it needs help and support is in spiritual nurturing of the existing congregation, in the development of further outreach activities in the wider community, and in pastoral care particularly to those in hospital or housebound.

**Who are we? Statistics on the Life of the Church over last 5 years – June 2017 based on Annual Church Returns 2016-7**

1. Members on roll	7
Under 25	0
25-44	0
44-64	1
Over 65	6
2. Changes in roll over last 5 years	
Additions on profession of faith	1
Transfer	0
Losses by death	10
by transfer	0
by removal from the roll	0
3. Geographic distribution	
Within 1 mile	6
Over 3 miles away	1
4. Number of adherents	
	14
5. Number of households in congregation	
	20 [ ie still living in own home]
6. Number of serving elders	
	4 + 1 non serving
7. Worship	
Morning worship	10-15
Frequency of Holy Communion	monthly
Baptisms in last 5 years	3
Special services held last year	Easter, Remembrance Service, Christmas, Harvest
Lay involvement in leading services	Church member lay preacher, plus several other local lay preachers, occasional songs of praise and café church; taking part in readings and drama sketches
Hymn book	Rejoice and Sing, (Mission Praise, Congregational Praise occasionally)
8. Church Meetings	
Frequency	4 times a year, after Sunday Worship

Average attendance	10
9. Youth and Children's work	Holiday Club with 5-10 children in half terms and summer holiday
10. Church Organisations	
Care Home Service	Once a month taken by Minister or elders

**Saxmundham Town Background – Population, etc**

Saxmundham is at the centre of Suffolk's Heritage Coast region and is ideally located for visiting the many attractions in the area. Saxmundham is well served for shops and banks, and the town has two caravan and camping sites, as well as several excellent hotels, guest houses and B&Bs. There's also a market every Wednesday. Within an hour's drive of Saxmundham, there's beautiful heritage coastline, several important nature reserves & areas of outstanding natural beauty, many historic sites, and the seaside resorts of Felixstowe, Aldeburgh, Southwold and Great Yarmouth. Its population in the 2011 census was 3644 but there has been extensive new house building since then.

As Saxmundham has a train station many of the population will be commuters working in Ipswich or Norwich; or even London; or retired people who have moved into the area from larger towns or cities.

**Ecumenical scene:** There are three Parish churches, The Salvation Army, a Pentecostal Church and a Methodist Chapel, all within 2 miles of Saxmundham. There is also a Friends Meeting House and two Catholic Churches within 8 miles. In terms of URC churches, there are two LEP churches within 5 miles, at Leiston and Framlingham. The nearest URC is at Halesworth and 4 other URCs within 25 miles, in Felixstowe, Southwold, and Ipswich.

**Background:** Saxmundham URC started life as a Congregational Chapel in 1850, and joined the URC in 1972. The overall theology in worship is middle of the road and traditional but we are open to new ideas.

**What are we here for: Our Mission Statement, printed in the newsletter :**

“As a fellowship of Christians we seek to worship God and to serve him in the community around us. We welcome as friends all those who come to share worship with us. Remembering the word of Jesus: ‘You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbours as yourself’, we live as witnesses of the Good News of Jesus Christ, showing his love for all people through our care for each other, our outreach to those around us and our concern for the wider world.” The words of Jesus are the central biblical core of our mission purpose.

**What we do as a church now: Our pattern of worship** focuses on our regular Sunday morning services in which, although we follow a fairly traditional pattern, we are happy to have occasional changes, such as using visual presentations, dramatic dialogues and in which we have a variety of preaching styles from our ministers and visiting lay preachers. We also host services connected with Women's World Day of Prayer, Royal British Legion Remembrance Sunday, Covenant Service etc. There is a communion service once a month as part of the normal Sunday worship. Services are taken by our minister [till October] and by local lay preachers 2-3 times a month, using mainly the Good News Bible and Rejoice and Sing. In the last few years we have had a church blessing and one wedding, but mostly funerals, for those with connections to the church.

**Our pattern of care and nurture** works through personal contacts via visits, email and telephone; with visits from our minister [till October] to those in need, which includes taking them communion. At present we have no prayer or Bible Study meetings. The morning tea and coffee after the service once a month also provides an opportunity for social interaction and support; as do our occasional 'ad hoc' lunches/afternoon teas, social and fundraising events.

**Our pattern of leadership and decision making** is done through church meetings held 4 times a year after the morning service. Decisions are made mainly at these meetings but if a decision needs to be agreed

between meetings ad hoc meetings are arranged. The minister generally attends and chairs these meetings [until October] and supports any activities that arise from the meetings, eg coffee mornings, holiday clubs.

**Our pattern of work with different groups** centres on:

Our work with young people through a week of morning activities during the summer holidays, and a one morning session each half term. The young people are aged between 5 – 11. The club has produced a number of banners that are displayed in the church for the whole congregation to share. Numbers vary from 5 – 12 and over the years we have welcomed over 50 children.

We run a regular filmshow once a month on a Saturday afternoon September to April [not December] for all members of the community.

There is also a regular monthly short service held at one of the care homes in Saxmundham, led by the ministers and others, focussing on well known hymns and prayers with short talks;

We are involved in regular giving to a variety of charities – local, national and international – at our Christmas and Harvest services; and respond when there are particular disaster appeals.

**Our pattern of partnership with others** is largely through the Churches Together in Saxmundham. Our representatives attend the meetings where joint activities are planned. We do keep in touch with the groups who used the Church Schoolroom, inviting them to our events.

**Our priorities for the future**

Our key priorities for future ministry are to give leadership and support in the areas of pastoral care of the sick and elderly, including taking communion to the housebound, church growth [including community involvement and outreach], and spiritual direction.

And more locally specific: Setting up a summertime Holiday at Home for a week; Collaborating ecumenically and with other local groups in community involvement through Churches Together and Youth/Community Worker, eg writing to councils and other organisations about local/national issues; building up from our Harvest, Christmas & Summer lunches to a wider community provision; Providing information about Bible Study Groups in the town; Having occasional services in people's homes; Trying to spread more widely publicity of events and services [volunteer to contact Radio Suffolk and EADT]; Having a short prayer gathering before the service

**The people resources currently in place** are connected with the main church officials – treasurer and secretaries – and with various responsibilities all of which are focussed on basic care and maintenance of buildings and services:- Overseeing heating and sound system; acting as representatives on various church bodies and organisations; doing regular Sunday duties, eg arranging flowers; cleaning premises and maintaining garden; having responsibility for lettings and pulpit supply; carrying out a variety of paper work admin and production of notices, etc; having responsibility for children and young people's activities.

**The property resources** are the church and the schoolroom, with their accompanying facilities – kitchen, toilets, storage space, boiler room, etc. They provide income for the church, but present problems of care and maintenance.

**The financial resources** are the income from lettings, the weekly collections or occasional donations. To help with lettings we have recently refurbished the kitchen.

**The opportunities for Saxmundham URC**

With the increased housing developments there are opportunities for the church to further its defined purpose to provide worship, to build faith and to serve community need within a context of outreach and witness to our Christian faith in the area. These opportunities would build on the work already being done by the congregation and through the Churches Together in Saxmundham network. The challenge is the one mirrored in many places, namely to bring into fellowship people who no longer find Sunday worship a key part of their lives but still sense a need for spiritual guidance and direction.

**How to get there:**

Our priorities are encapsulated in our mission statement and those listed above. We have been encouraged by the success of our various social events over the past few years as they have brought people into the church buildings and look to build on and widen these contacts.

**What help do we need** to achieve our priorities in the future

As we have an ageing congregation local help is likely to be difficult so we look to the future new arrangements in ministry to give support, guidance, ideas and personal input as we try to widen our membership and our commitment to Christ in what is an ever-growing community in Saxmundham. To help with our future development we look to guidance and support in spiritual directions beyond Sunday worship.