

Articles of enquiry 2025



Within the Diocese, the term 'Articles of Enquiry' (AoE) refers to a set of questions or topics which are posed by the Archdeacons. 2025 was the second year it was agreed to collect information using the AoE section of the Online Parish Return System. This year's chosen themes related to the Environment, Discipleship, Giving / Stewardship, Mission, and Safeguarding.

The information provided on these key areas helps us gather data that can be analysed to help inform decisions. The responses are used to highlight the positives across the Diocese as well as where support is required, or helping to offer further assistance.

We thank you for your time and effort in responding to the AoE and helping provide us with valuable insight.

Executive Summary

133 Churches responded to the AoE, we can consider this to be a good sample size. Of the responses, 4% were from Ipswich Archdeaconry, 50% from Sudbury Archdeaconry and 46% from Suffolk Archdeaconry.

Energy

- The primary source of heating used by Churches were "other" heating sources, with gas or oil used by only 24.
- 11 boilers were installed approximately over 15 years ago, indicating an aging infrastructure. There were a further 7 boilers installed between 5-9 years ago.
- A majority (90) had completed the Energy Footprint Tool, although a notable minority (8) required support.
- Low energy lighting is present in many churches (90 either fully, or partially), but not universally adopted. There were 17 responses that were unsure if low energy lighting had been installed.

Discipleship

- Small Groups (such as House Groups or Bible Study) were offered by 39 responses, of these existing Church groups, 16 could be defined as being Missional Small Groups.
- Spiritual growth opportunities were offered by 42 Churches, particularly through apps, prayer groups, and quiet days
- Seasonal Groups were quite common, particularly during Advent or Lent. There was also a small number (8) which offered these at other times.

Giving and Stewardship

- Steward Sundays were held by 15 responses, with 10 asked to reaffirm giving, while 12 asked for a one-off donation.

Mission - highlights of 2024

"Increase in young families and baptisms". "A new heating system installed at the very end of 2023 meant that our church became a warm and welcoming space for people all year round and that our energy costs reduced dramatically". "Rise in the number of weddings in our church, and the associated increase in relationships".

Mission - what attracted new people to your church or to your activities?

"Positive, polite, friendly and active clergy" "We have made the church building more accessible to encourage greater access by our village community". "A warm welcome".

Safeguarding

A culture of safeguarding is promoted through a variety of measures, including displaying posters, discussing the topic and having an active Safeguarding officer.