Stour Valley Vineyard Church Logo

A group of people in a room

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CHURCH PROFILE

November 2025

**VISION**

We seek to *encounter* the presence of the Living God, and we believe we are *transformed* by that encounter.

We believe that we are changed when we are in His manifest presence and when our lives are submitted to the authority of His Word. We want to live like Jesus and be His hands and feet to the poor and the marginalised.

**VALUES**

Our values align with those of the national Vineyard Movement in the UK and Ireland. These values are often called ‘Vineyard Distinctives’. You can find more detail on our website: [Vineyard Distinctives](https://www.stourvalleyvineyard.org/vineyard-distinctives).

We also have four SVV family values. We encourage those who feel part of the church community to:

* Join us on a Sunday
* Join a home group
* Find somewhere to serve
* Give regularly.

We believe that being surrounded by a community of believers is important for us, in order to stay strong in the faith and for us to be encouraged to grow. Serving is the way we use our gifts and give back to the Lord, and giving monetarily is a giving back to the One who has given so generously to us.

**A BRIEF HISTORY**

Stour Valley Vineyard Church (SVV) was planted out of West Suffolk Vineyard in September 2007 by Andrew and Emma Stewart-Darling (with their 3 daughters) who had moved up from their church in Twickenham, West London. Initially, one other family joined them at weekly meetings in their home. As the congregation grew via social events and ‘giveaways’ in the marketplace, the church began to meet in Sudbury Town Hall, and then a local social club. In 2019, it began to lease a building on the site of Ormiston Sudbury Academy.

In 2021, Andrew and Emma handed leadership of the church to Joel and Kady Taylor, who relocated from California with their four young children to take up the role of Senior Pastors. Shortly after their arrival, Ormiston school began a large-scale re-development and the church had to vacate its premises. Sunday services are currently held at Tudor Primary School and the church rents office space and storage space for its Storehouse foodbank on a local industrial estate. The church has recently been negotiating over the lease a town centre location to house all its activities, though negotiations have ceased to await the vision of a new pastor on a change of premises.

Under Joel and Kady’s leadership, the church has continued its focus on teaching, worship and prayer, but also added new ministries for children and those in need of healing. Nevertheless, after four exciting and kingdom-filled years, Joel and Kady Taylor have heard the Lord call them on to their next adventure. The Trustees have appointed an interim Leadership Team to hold and care for the church through this transitional season, ensuring that Sunday mornings, Home Groups and other ministries continue to thrive and that pastoral care is provided.

**GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

Sudbury is a vibrant semi-rural market town on the South Suffolk/North Essex border. It the birthplace of Thomas Gainsborough and retains strong historic links with its working silk industry. The town population is approximately 24,000 people with around another 20,000 people living in the surrounding villages, giving a total reach of 44,000 people. However, the town is currently expanding, with around 1,000 homes being added as part of the Chilton Woods development.

The town has a broad C2DE demographic, with surrounding villages tending to have a more affluent, professional profile. The town has a strong sense of its own community with local retail trade being made up of national chains and independents. It is served by a number of supermarket chains (Tesco, Sainsburys, Waitrose, Aldi) and a regular outdoor market, held on Market Hill. The town has two secondary schools, six primary schools and a large leisure centre. It also has a train station with links directly into London and is equidistant between Bury St Edmunds, Colchester, Ipswich and Braintree.

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**MEMBERSHIP**

Attendance at Sunday services currently numbers around 80 people, including around 20 children and youth. Stour Valley Vineyard operates on the principle that people need to ‘belong’ before they ‘believe’, before they ‘behave’, and so there has always been a strong emphasis on providing a welcoming space for all. There are many opportunities for people to get involved and be part of the church, without strings attached. As they have been loved and accepted in their current state, the church has seen people find Jesus and begin to be changed by the Holy Spirit and, where appropriate, get baptised. Over the years we have reached out to a good number of those who have never known God’s love or who have lost faith in the Church.

**WORSHIP AND PRAYER**

We believe in intimate and accessible worship. Under Joel and Kady’s leadership, the church has developed a talented worship team who love to lead people to engage with God. We hold monthly Worship Circle gatherings, where those with little experience of worship leading can develop their skills and confidence, and we are seeing the fruits of this in an expanding team. We regularly meet with other Vineyard Churches in the East Anglia region for worship evenings.

We are also passionate about getting into the presence of the Almighty God through prayer. We hold a regular monthly prayer meeting, and we have a team of people trained in Immanuel Prayer for anyone wishing to experience greater intimacy with Jesus. We offer prayer ministry at each Sunday morning service and see regular evidence of the power of prayer to heal and transform us. We were (to our knowledge) the first church in Suffolk to run 24/7 prayer. ​The church runs an annual prayer event during Advent and, at Pentecost, joins with other local churches on the Market Hill in Sudbury to pray for the local area.

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**GROUPS**

The church has committed itself to seeing healthy and growing groups to suit all types of people, regardless of faith or social background. It’s philosophy that ‘life is better in circles than rows’ means it tries to stop Sundays as being the only time to get to know people and grow in faith to see change.

Around half of the church regularly attend one of four weekly home groups (three for adults and one for youth). There are also two mid-week bible study groups and a monthly prayer meeting. A monthly mid-morning ‘Coffee and Chat’ group provides a space for fellowship over coffee (or tea) and cake. In addition, we have a mid-week group (Little Wonders) for parents and their pre-school aged children.

We also have a vibrant men’s ministry. The group meet regularly for social events, which serve as effective gathering opportunities. Many in the group attend the annual East Anglian Men’s Weekend which provides a time of worship, teaching and fellowship together. Our women’s ministry is less developed but offers significant opportunities.

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

We love to minister to children and young people, and the church is one of the few in the local area with well-attended ministries to children of all ages. As families have come and gone, grown up and moved on, numbers have inevitably fluctuated, but the impact of children discovering a relationship with Jesus for themselves has seen lasting fruit.

* Pre-school children meet on a Sunday morning in our Little Stars group. This is complemented by our mid-week toddler group, Little Wonders, which meets in the local Scout premises. We currently have around 7 pre-school children attending Little Stars and around 20 attending Little Wonders.
* Primary-school aged children meet on a Sunday morning in our Rockets group. The group is currently following the Konnect curriculum from Life.Church. Around 10 children regularly attend Rockets.
* Our youth group (Supernovas) meet twice per month on a Sunday morning and twice per month as a mid-week home group. They regularly attend Dreaming the Impossible (DTI) and grow in their relationships with God each year through this time away together. This group currently has five teenagers attending on a regular basis.

The church is blessed with a strong group of volunteers in these ministries. However, there is currently a need to develop new leadership in our Rockets group, and support for our children and youth ministry more generally.

**OUTREACH**

We are passionate about doing church outside the church. Storehouse foodbank – our compassion ministry – is an important focus for outreach, helping those who find themselves in short term crisis, through a referral system from local agencies. Storehouse has charitable status linked in with the church and is funded through individuals, charitable groups, churches, businesses and grants. The church trustees appoint the Storehouse Manager and many of the volunteers come from within the church. Storehouse has built strong community relationships, working to become a signposting service for other groups such as Citizen’s Advice; Drug and Rehab support; Job Centre; Housing Associations and local support groups for mental health. It has also forged strong connections with many local churches, schools and community groups who provide collection points for donated food. Storehouse fed an average of more than 50 people per week in 2024 and, sadly, the need is growing.

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We also reach out into the local community through our mid-week Little Wonders group for parents and their pre-school aged children, the majority of which do not have a church background. We aim to provide a place where the children and their adults can meet, make friends, socialise and have fun. We share stories, sing and make music and crafts, all while sharing the good news of Jesus.

Over the past 2-3 years, the church has begun to participate in the wider "Healing on the Streets" ministry, an initiative that involves offering Christian prayer for physical and emotional healing in public spaces. We have a trained team of volunteers who have offered prayer for healing in the town marketplace, on a pitch provided by the council, and also hosted ‘healing rooms’ where people could come for prayer.

SVV was frequently running the Alpha course prior to the COVID pandemic. Restarting this form of outreach is seen as an important goal for the church going forward.

**GIVING AND FINANCE**

One of the family values at SVV is to give regularly. This is mainly done via the Stewardship scheme where Gift Aid can be directly applied, giving is also done as cash on a Sunday. The church is fully self-funded. The Storehouse food bank is funded by individual donations and grants.

**STAFFING**

Paid staff:

* Senior Pastor (full-time) – currently Joint Senior Pastors (job-share)
* Church Administrator (4 days per week)
* Finance Manager (1 day per week)
* Storehouse Foodbank Manager (4 x 6 hours per week)

Voluntary Ministry Team Leaders:

* Welcome and Venue
* Media and Worship Tech
* Catering
* Youth
* Children
* Pre-school
* Mid-week toddler group
* Prayer
* Worship
* Healing on the Streets
* Home Groups

Developing, equipping and nurturing our paid staff and voluntary team leaders is an identified priority for the church and its senior pastors going forward.

**TRUSTEES**

The church has four trustees in addition to the senior pastors. The trustees have responsibility for different areas of governance and are committed to the church’s vision and values. The current trustees are all members of the church and have experience of finance, administration and people management across the private, public and charitable sectors.

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