**ALL SAINTS’ CHURCH, STEEP**

**CHURCHWARDEN’S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING APRIL 2024**

**Full Report**

1. **The Role of the Churchwardens and PCC**

The role of the Churchwardens and PCC is to assist the Vicar and Ministry Team in the Parish of Steep and Stroud bearing in mind we are in a Benefice with Froxfield with Privett. Our responsibilities are to support the Ministry Team both practically and spiritually as well as maintaining and running our two churches, their churchyards, preparing an annual budget, ensuring the parish finances are robust and keeping correct parish records.

In Steep there is considerable overlap between the religious and secular side of the parish and the necessity for there to be good communication between the Vicar and the Ministry Team, the Churchwardens, the PCC and our Benefice Administrator. This is achieved in Steep and Stroud along with considerable help from a number of formal and informal committees and individuals that take on other tasks to support not only Susie and her ministry team but also the Churchwardens. This help ensures the smooth running of the church services, its buildings and its grounds.

This teamwork has been particularly apparent as we moved from Vacancy to the Licensing of our new Priest in Charge in October.

1. **The Ministry Team**

The Rev Dr Susie Collingridge was appointed Priest in Charge by Bishop Jonathan in August having served as Associate Vicar in the Benefice since October 2018. We were delighted Susie was able to take on this new role in a part time capacity while continuing as Area Dean for Petersfield Deanery.

Sue Jones, her partner, was ordained in a ceremony in Portsmouth Cathedral in June and has been working as a curate, under the Rev Peter Sutton, both in the Hawkley Benefice and Steep with Froxfield with Privett Benefice.

We are also supported in the Benefice by The Rev Joanna Farrell (PtO) who kindly takes many of our various services along with the Ven Adrian Harbidge who visits once a month on average as well as Lindsay Clegg, Lay Pastoral Assistant in Froxfield.

Caroline Hilton continues as our Reader with Permission to Officiate (PtO) and we are indebted to her for the Prayer and Study Groups she leads along with a Lent Course each year.

Anne Grove is our Benefice Administrator who efficiently produces a comprehensive and informative weekly Newsletter which she circulates by email but also ensures there are copies in our churches. She also supervises the church diary and bookings which helps ensure the smooth running of all our activities.

Jonathan Selby and Bubbles Silk have continued as churchwardens for the year but Joanathan is standing down at the APCM so there is a vacancy to fill. We would like to thank Jonathan for his work for the parish.

We are fortunate in Steep to have many parishioners willing to volunteer their help who manage a variety of things from building and structural improvements, general maintenance, projects and the churchyard. A number of these activities are bound by a specific set of rules and processes which must be followed, sometimes making these tasks more complex! Without this input the church would not run as smoothly as it does and we are very grateful to everyone who helps.

1. **Church Electoral Roll**

Judy Thompson kindly keeps this up to date and we are delighted to see the numbers have increased this year.

Previous Roll 134 (2022)

Current Roll 138 - 3 deaths but 7 additions

It is encouraging to note that our electoral roll number have increased marginally year on year since 2020. This is important as the Diocese use these rolls as an indicator of the health and strength of a parish. This is relevant when there is a Vacancy and you need to justify maintaining a resident Vicar for the Benefice.

Only those on the electoral roll are able to elect the members of the Parochial Church Council for the ensuing year at the APCM. Churchwardens are elected by the parish.

1. **Meetings of the PCC and Matters Discussed**

The last APCM meeting was attended by members of the PCC namely: Susie Collingridge, Sue Jones, Caroline Hilton, Amanda Greenlee (Secretary and Deanery Synod Representative), David Storey, Helen Muir-Davies, Caroline Robinson, Jonathan Selby (CW) and Bubbles Silk (CW).

And apologies received from: Fran Box, Geoffrey Dale, David Erskine-Hill, Hew Granlund (Hon Treasury), Anthony Littlejohn, Christopher Reed, Judy Thompson and Richard Welch.

Members of the parish included: George & Felicity Tullis, Brian Keys, David & Joanna Dobson, David & Carole Kidd, Roderick Snell, Heather Maybury, Joanna Farrell, Anne Grove, Ted and Norma Bones, Gill Wicksteed, Stephen Rae, John Trewby, Naomi Anson, Liz & Magan Singodia, with apologies from Rachel Reed, Michael Thompson and Caroline Welch.

The PCC meets four times a year with the agenda including a report from Susie on issues of ministry, a CW report of activities, an update of finances and investments, a report on buildings and maintenance and social events. There are also updates on safe guarding, health and safety, FOSC, the Deanery Synod and feedback on our Ghana link (formerly IDWAL) and PACT.

While we were in Vacancy the PCC appointed a small subcommittee to draw up our Parish Profile consisting of the two CWs, Amanda Greenlee, Judy Thompson, Richard Welch and David Anson. The CWs also met with Rob Hollis and Sara Greenaway, the CWs in our sister parish, to combine the document, with considerable help from Sue Jones, for approval by the Diocese.

Events overtook us and the Bishop gave approval in June for us to interview for a .5 position with residency in the Vicarage. Will Hughes, as Acting Archdeacon, with the 4 parish representatives duly interviewed Susie and we were able to confirm our wish for her to be appointed priest in charge for the Benefice. This was duly confirmed by the Bishop and the PCC.

During our Vacancy All Saints was helped enormously by Susie as our Associate Vicar and somehow, with Joanna, Adrian, Sue and other occasional visiting clergy, they managed to maintain a full range of services. An amazing feat for which we are very appreciative. It may explain how the numbers attending church services were maintained and even increased during this period.

The two Benefice parishes held a joint meeting in September before the regular PCC meeting. This was a chance to discuss various topics and aims for the future. However it was apparent that it would be more helpful in future to hold these joint meetings on a separate occasion at least once a year.

There are also meetings that the CWs have with Susie on day to day matters as well as joint meetings with the Froxfield CWs.

I would like to thank all the members of the PCC for their help and support particularly during the vacancy. David Erskine-Hill stepped down from the committee and we thank him for his support and his continued contribution to our services

1. **Mission Activities**

**Schools:** With Susie resident in the village, she has been able to renew our links with Steep School. She has been appointed a governor and is involved in a weekly assembly with them. The school also uses the church for their Harvest Festival, Christingle, Easter Service, Leaver’s Service and other informal visits. We hope to extend this link in the future.

Bedales holds its candlelit Carol Service, Dunhurst also has a carol service and classes from there and Dunannie visit the church to learn more about the building and its meaning. One pupil was prepared and confirmed this year and continues to attend our services often with friends.

1. **FOSC**:

We are indebted to FOSC for their support for our church. Their fundraising has enabled not only the installation of WiFi and improved spotlighting but money to provide a new Barnsley notice board and future projects such as improved kitchen and disabled toilet facilities.

They hold their annual Carol Concert with mulled wine which is always a joyful and lively occasion with both Steep School and the Ukraine Choir performing to a full congregation.

Welcome Club: They visited the church for a talk by Fran Box on our kneelers which are such a feature of the building. Tea was served afterwards and it was encouraging to see the church used for a community event.

The PCC would encourage future similar events.

1. **Fabric of the Churches**

The Acting Archdeacon Will Hughes made the five yearly inspection of the church in February and found everything in order.

The delayed Quinquennial Inspection was completed in December and January by our architect Julain Vallis over 3 visits due to inclement weather! The report is available to anyone interested. Hugh Routh has been very helpful in assisting with this inspection and other building matters and we are very grateful for his expert input.

Jonathan and Bubbles have completed a check of the Terrier.

1. **Churchyard**

Due to an incredible storm in March part of the east wall of the churchyard was extensively damaged. Ownership of this was difficult to establish and we were fortunate that Tim and Lynette Clarke, our neighbours, were able to obtain a qualified and expert builder to repair the wall with DACs approval and at a shared insurance cost.

We now contract out the spraying of the church paths to Shrekfeet who are qualified to operate in public spaces and they attend 3 times a year.

David Morris now helps maintain the grounds on a twice monthly basis or when required. He has cleared a lot of the undergrowth that built up over the Covid years, pruned trees and shrubs, strimmed and tidied the Ashes area and cleared drains and gutters plus keeping the outside north wall and lych gate swept. He is invaluable to us!

Paul Garstin resurrected the church mowing rota which for a variety of reasons – wet weather and difficulty with mowers was not always achieved! It has been agreed to try a new regime this year with David tasked with mowing once a month and the rota operating fortnightly inbetween. The need for a new mower is also under discussion.

1. **Worship and Church Attendance**

We have had a full year of services. 8.30am BCP Holy Communion is celebrated most Sundays in either Steep or Stroud with an average attendance of 15-16. Parish Communion (Common Worship) is every Sunday in either Steep or High Cross with attendance in Steep averaging 49. On the first Sunday of the month there is the TenAM service for all ages when families are particularly encouraged to attend. There have been 2 weddings, 3 baptisms and 7 funerals, memorial services or ashes ceremonies.

Our year started with Palm Sunday which this year fell on the first Sunday so a gathering of young children to enact Jesus entering Jerusalem with palms waving and much musical accompaniment! There was a Celtic Maunday Thursday service and a Good Friday walk in Froxfield followed by the Last Hour of the Cross in Steep. We met again in Privett for the Lighting of the Fire on Easter Eve with a full church on Easter morning.

May saw us celebrating the Coronation with a lively Community Coronation Celebration Service on the Common followed by a village bring your own picnic and BBQ and traditional races and games to round off the afternoon. Very much a community event.

This year the planned outdoor Pet Service at Steep had to move indoors but luckily all four footed pets could be accommodated!

In October we held our Harvest Festival and later in the month our Benefice Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving for families to remember those who have died followed by refreshments and the opportunity for reminiscences.

In November we gathered on 11/11/11 at the village War Memorial for a short service with Remembrance Sunday the following day.

December saw the revival of a Carol Service at Stroud and then a full programme of services at Steep – candlelit Midnight Communion and All Age on Christmas Day.

Steep held an Ash Wednesday Communion to mark the beginning of Lent.

Mothering Sunday in March with families gathering in their Mother Church and children helping to distribute flowers to all the mothers.

Easter saw the full range of services around the whole Benefice starting with Palm Sunday then communion on Maunday Thursday, a Good Friday walk, the Last Hours of the Cross, the Lighting of the fire on Easter eve and Easter Day itself.

Stroud Mission Church is largely managed by Angela and Chris Snow with a regular once a month BCP held there. The CWs are extremely grateful for their help with this and to David Erskine-Hill who maintains the churchyard.

1. **Licensing of The Rev Dr Susie Collingridge**

On October 2nd High Cross hosted the Licensing of the Rev Dr Susie Collingridge to be our Priest in Charge of the Benefice. This was a magnificent and moving ceremony conducted by Bishop Jonathan and attended by our Archdeacon and many of the Deanery clergy along with parishioners from both churches. Refreshments afterwards in the village hall made for a celebratory event.

I would like to thank Rob Hollis for master minding this event with help from Steep as it required much thought and planning.

1. **Safeguarding**

The PCC has appointed Helen Muir-Davies to be their Safeguarding Officer (PSO) who reports at each parish meeting on any issues arising. The PCC members renew their registration every three years, usually in an ‘on line’ process. We also comply with the mandatory training required to keep us all up to date. This PCC has complied with the duty to have ‘due regard’ to the House of Bishops guidance in relation to safeguarding.

1. **Thanks**

On behalf of the PCC and myself I would like to record our thanks to the many people involved with the smooth running of the churches which makes my role so much easier! A special thanks to Gerald Marlow our organist and the choir led by Ellie Thackeray which give our services wonderful support. Outstanding thanks to Jess Pocock and Selina Garstin who oversee the flower decorations and their team of arrangers both for the regular flower arrangements and the festivals of Easter, Harvest and Christmas and occasional weddings. Selena also leads the Social Committee who help on numerous occasions such as the Barn Dance, the Edward Thomas tea and the Steep Lecture. Then there are the sidesman, chalice bearers, Intercessionists, the cleaners and brass and silver polishers. To our Sacristan Gill Wicksteed who manages altar cloths and all the linen and launders vestments, To Paul Garstin for managing the mowing and all the people on the rota. To David Storey who faithfully opens the church each morning and Hazel Langley who until recently secured the church every evening plus the Saturday evening preparers. To David Dobson and his team who produce the monthly magazine and the people who deliver it. To David and Carole Kidd and their helpers who ensure we are fed and watered after the parish communion services. And on special occasions thanks to Hugh and Mo Routh who ring our bells for us!

Finally a big thank you to Susie who oversees us all helped enormously, I know, by Joanna, Sue and Adrian