

# ALL SAINTS' PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL (PCC)

## Report for the Drinkstone Annual Parish Meeting, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026

### A Year of Vacancy

During the Vacancy from 15th July 2024, the Churchwardens and the PCC were responsible for All Saints' Church, subject to any directions from the Archdeacon or the Rural Dean. Our aim in 2025, without a Rector, was to keep going and stay as positive as possible.

### Membership

Membership of the PCC is either ex-officio or by election at by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), or by co-option, following Church Representation Rules.

During the year, the following served as members of the PCC:

Rector: Vacant.

Representative on Deanery Synod: Vacant.

Churchwardens: **Mark Campbell** (Chair); **David Medcalf** (Vice-chair until November 2025).

Elected Representatives: **Astrid Gale** (Ex officio Safeguarding Officer and full member of the PCC from April 2025); **Christine Lambert** (Representative to the Village Hall committee); **Tony Schmitt** (Treasurer); **Jo Stark** (Representative to the Fundraising group); **Lynne Woodward** (Secretary); **Dave Woodward** (Fabric until October 2025).

The following served as officers, not being members of the PCC: **Nigel Gale** –Tower Captain (appointed in July 2025); and **David Ford** – Joint Fabric Officer.

Paul Clarke, Reader, and chair of St Mary's Woolpit PCC, continued to attend our meetings to help liaise with St Mary's, which was greatly appreciated. We therefore numbered nine when all were present, and held two meetings with eight, representing an excellent 96% attendance.

David Medcalf retired from the PCC in November, having provided invaluable experience and support. His and Sue Medcalf's contributions to the management, fabric and spirit of All Saints were truly outstanding over many years.

In December we mourned the death of Dave Woodward, who gave so many hours to All Saints as PCC member, Fabric Officer, Communion Assister, Sidesman and Churchyard team worker. Dave was part of the fabric of All Saints and dearly loved our church and its history. His presence, boundless enthusiasm and depth of knowledge are sorely missed.

The relationship with our sister parish Woolpit strengthened as the year progressed, thanks to shared events such as the outing to Drinkstone Mill, Paul's presence on the PCC, and several of St Mary's congregation attending our 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Benefice services. (Joint events were also held in our search for a new Rector.)

### Church services and attendance

28 members are listed on the Church's new 2025 Electoral Roll. (The Roll is abolished every six years, and a new one is started.)

The pattern of services in All Saints continued to be Holy Communion on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, with a Benefice service on 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays; the average attendance was 17 adults and no children.

The informal Breakfast meetings continued on some 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays, with an average attendance of 7. Throughout 2025 we were led by our retired priests Adrian Copping, Brin Singleton, Frank Gimson, Miriam Webb and Duncan Green; Richard Stainer also presided. Our organists Ray Brown, Anne Clarke, Calvin Goymer, Roslyn Poole, Jo Brown and Tony Mason provided joyful support.

Thanks are due to our Communion assisters David Medcalf, Dave Woodward, Jo Stark, David Ford and Paul Clarke, with especial thanks to Dave Woodward whose contributions over the years were so willingly given.

Coffee and chat at the end of our services continued to provide a happy ingredient to our fellowship, with thanks to Lynne, Jo, Christine, and Rosemarie Ford for making it so.

A service of thanksgiving was held on 11<sup>th</sup> November for the life of Peter Norman. No weddings were held.

The APCM was held on 6<sup>th</sup> April, with attendance of 15. The Mothering Sunday service was held on 30<sup>th</sup> March, attended by 19, with one child. 20 people attended the Easter Sunday service.

Notable services included 'The Blessing of the Bells' service, held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, taken by Paul Clarke and Revd Brin Singleton; and the 'Bells' Dedication' service on 11<sup>th</sup> May, led by Joe Hawes, Dean of St Edmundsbury. These two services were wonderfully well attended: 70 and 123 people respectively.

The Remembrance Sunday service took place on 9<sup>th</sup> November with a recorded Last Post and Reveille; attendance was 64. Phil Shelley, Robin Sharp, and Sam and Lottie Durrant were major contributors.

Led by David and Sue Medcalf, a team of the Church Recording Group of the Arts Society, West Suffolk & Bury St Edmunds, concluded their valuable work, recording and photographing every item and the entire internal fabric of All Saints. The presentation of the 'Drinkstone Record' was then held at a special service on 23<sup>rd</sup> November. It stands as an enduring achievement.

Our service of Carols and Readings was held on 21<sup>st</sup> December with a full church of 124 people. The readers were Robin Sharp, Sue Rawlinson, Frances Ridsdill Smith, Sue Goreham and Michael Walton. The DrinksTones choir and the Drinkstone Ensemble greatly enriched the service. However, no Christmas Day service took place, since finding a Presiding Priest proved difficult and attendance in 2024 had been minimal.

Grants were made in the year to the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, Bury Town Pastors and Bury Christian Youth. We also continued to support Restore (formerly called Bury Women's Refuge), Stowmarket Food Bank, Gatehouse Food Bank, and the Royal British Legion.

### **Filling the Vacancy**

In our search for a new Rector, the first two rounds were unsuccessful: no-one applied in January while in June the sole applicant dropped out before interview stage. However, two excellent candidates applied in September and, following visits and interviews, the Benefice were delighted to appoint the **Revd Sarah Hall** as Curate-in-Charge. Subsequently, Sarah held a very useful meeting with the Woolpit and Drinkstone churchwardens on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025, prior to her Licensing service on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026.

### **Our Achievements and Thanks**

Please refer to the PCC's individual reports on Safeguarding, Finance, Fundraising, Fabric and Bells for in-depth accounts of the year. (Requests to Lynne Woodward.) Lynne's support to All Saints has been indispensable throughout 2025. In addition to her demanding secretarial role, her spiritual and practical commitment to All Saints has helped to keep us together.

With Astrid as Benefice Safeguarding Officer, with responsibility for St Mary's Woolpit as well, this key role remained in the safest of hands, ensuring the Parish Dashboard was maintained and all policies were followed.

To keep All Saints alive, energetic fundraising and the professional management of finances are crucial and co-dependent. We are indebted to Jo and a hardworking seven-strong fundraising team; and to Tony for his expertise and outstanding commitment. We want to extend sincere thanks to all those involved in fundraising during 2025 – including many non-churchgoers – and all those who came to the events. The church and village community work so well together.

The presence of bats, such an issue in 2024, caused a great deal of work and expense for All Saints but was ultimately resolved, to the PCC's relief. This delayed the installation of the new bells but the target of ringing them by Easter 2025 was achieved. A successful Tower Open Afternoon was held on 24<sup>th</sup> August. The new Bells are a magnificent achievement and a resounding success! We hope the new swift boxes in the Tower may bring added joy in 2026.

2025 was a year of great achievement on the Fabric front. Led by Dave Woodward and David Ford, the Quinquennial project (a mandatory survey – every five years – of the church's internal and external fabric, structure, roofs, drainage, electrics, heating, accessibility and safety, carried out by an architect approved by the diocese) started on 18<sup>th</sup> August and concluded on 19<sup>th</sup> December. Valiants, the contractors, did extensive work, both inside and out. The costs exceeded £80,000. It would be impossible to maintain All Saints without regular giving, one-off donations and generous legacies and bequests, let alone have funds to make improvements.

Another important project saw LED lighting installed in the nave and chancel. Nigel Gale also organised the installation of a Time Capsule beneath the south nave at the end of September, which villagers contributed to.

A very important milestone was Peter Bumstead's completion of the organ restoration.

Our thanks are due to many other dedicated and talented people this year:

Our Cleaning team, led by Astrid Gale, working amidst the upheaval of the Quinquennial project from August to December; the Flower team, led by Christine Lambert, adding great beauty to the church with magnificent displays; our Bellringing team, led by Nigel Gale as Tower Captain, with Astrid and a band of regular ringers from Drinkstone and Woolpit; care of the church linen undertaken by Rosie Campbell; our expert Tree Warden, Peter Holborn, who organised working parties to maintain and enhance the churchyard's environmental habitat, whilst the Top Garden team continued to mow the churchyard twice monthly.

Great thanks are also due to Lindi Belfield, who continued her valuable work as editor of the Drinkstone Parish magazine, which the Church provides as a secular service to the village. Thanks also to Sue Cousins, the advertising manager, who, with Tony Schmitt's assistance, continued to work tirelessly to secure the advertising that is an essential source of All Saints' income. Sue has now retired. (In 2026 her role has been assumed by Lottie Durrant.) We are also very grateful to the team of volunteers who deliver the magazine throughout the village.

(A postscript: we can report that, since Revd Sarah's arrival less than four months ago, we feel inspired, enthused and invigorated!)