

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, STEEP

CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 2026

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. Their 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.

The church warden's responsibilities. 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 Churchwarden. This help ensures the smooth running of the church services, its buildings and its grounds.

2. The Ministry Team

Rev'd Canon Dr Susie Collingridge is now licensed (by Bishop Jonathan) as Vicar of the Benefice while continuing as Area Dean for the Petersfield Deanery. Sue Jones, her partner, has been working as a curate, has now finished her training and will be confirmed as Associate Priest for the Benefice of Steep by Bishop Jonathan at the beginning of June. She will also have some continuing duties supporting the Hawkley Benefice.

We are supported in Steep and Stroud by The Reverend Pippa Madgwick with Permission to Officiate (PtO) who kindly takes many of our various services. We are also supported by her husband Graham Madgwick who is a Reader (LLM) and has supported the TENam service. We are also grateful to the Venerable Adrian Harbidge who visits as needed.

Caroline Hilton continues as our Reader (PtO) and we are indebted to her for the Prayer and Study Groups she leads. She and the Madgwicks have led well attended Lent Courses this year.

We sadly said goodbye in March to Joanna Farrell who is 'stepping down' from the regular rota of services but still remains available. We give heartfelt thanks for the ministry and care she has given us since her ordination in 2006.

We also said goodbye to Anne Grove who was our Benefice Administrator for eleven years. Her calm efficiency and wide knowledge ensured the smooth running of the church. She was much appreciated and we thank her for all she did for the Benefice, often above and beyond the call of duty.

Helen Muir-Davis is our new 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 and we would struggle to manage without her.

Judy Thompson continues into her 3rd year as churchwarden. There is currently a vacancy for a further churchwarden.

3. Church Electoral Roll

Heather Maybury kindly keeps this up to date. Many thanks for collating all the information.

Previous Roll 122 (2025-6). Current Roll 130 (4 removals and 12 additions).

It is important to maintain these figures as the Diocese use these rolls as an indicator of the health and strength of a parish. Not only is the Electoral Roll a factor in the calculation of the Parish Share allocation (along with attendance and income), but it is also relevant when there is a vacancy and the need to justify maintaining a resident Vicar for the Benefice. Only those on the electoral roll are eligible to elect the members of the Parochial Church Council for the ensuing year at the APCM. Churchwardens are elected by the parish.

4. Meetings of the PCC and Matters Discussed

The last APCM meeting was attended by these members of the PCC namely: Susie Collingridge, Sue Jones, Caroline Hilton, Amanda Greenlee (Secretary and Deanery Synod Representative), Christopher Reed, David Storey, Caroline Robinson, Bubbles Silk, Church Warden (CW) Judy Thompson (CW) and Richard Welch.

Apologies received from: Geoffrey Dale, Anthony Littlejohn, and Helen Muir-Davies.

The PCC met five times last year with the agenda including a report from Susie on issues of ministry, a Church warden report of activities, an update of finances and investments, a report on buildings and maintenance and social and fundraising events. There are also updates on safe guarding, health and safety, FOSC, the Deanery Synod and PACT.

There are also meetings that the Church warden has with Susie on day to day matters.

Steep has an active PCC who support the Ministry team and the churchwarden. A thank you to our efficient secretary Amanda Greenlee, with a special thank you for patiently proof reading and fact checking all my reports.

There are particular thanks to Hew Granlund, our Treasurer, who not only looks after our financial affairs but takes care of the boiler and many other day to day jobs, to Graham Madgwick who is now chair of the Fabric and Finance Committee and has taken a very prominent roll in overseeing our roof repairs, and also to Simon Mason who has taken responsibility for the churchyard. There is also a special thank you to Hugh Routh who has taken responsibility for maintenance and repairs of the church over many years - often 'hands on'. He has guided us through the Quinquennial Report and although stepping back is always available for advice.

Petersfield Deanery Synod; Amanda Greenlee and Caroline Robinson do sterling work here as our representatives, keeping us well informed on developments and discussions taking place. Amanda is also our PACT representative and provides a valuable liaison. We are fortunate in Steep to have many parishioners willing to volunteer their time, 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 process which must be followed, sometimes making these tasks more complex. Without this input the Church would not run as smoothly and as efficiently as it does. We are extremely grateful to all who help.

4. Mission Activities

Schools: Susie is very much involved at Steep, Church of England Primary School and is an ex-officio governor. She and Sue take weekly Collective Worship with them. The school also uses the church for their Harvest Festival, Christingle, Easter and Leavers' Service and other informal visits. There is still a vacancy for a Foundation Governor. We hope to extend this link in the future.

Pippa Madgwick has been forging links with Langrish School (Stroud) and visits monthly. It is not a church school but is in a village with many young families.

In September our church was visited by twenty six visitors taking part in the Ride and Stride annual event in the diocese. These are sponsored journeys, by any means of transport, between churches in the diocese, organised by Hampshire and the Islands Historic Churches Trust. Grateful thanks to Amanda who manned the church to give welcome, encouragement and refreshments to those who visited.

Bedales holds its candlelit Carol Service, Dunhurst also has a Carol Service and classes from there and children from Dunannie visit the church to learn more about the building and the community it serves.

The Steep Lecture: This well-attended and stimulating annual event was organised this year by Susie, with the guest speaker being our own Bishop of Portsmouth, Jonathan Frost. His title was 'What, on Earth are we Doing' when he spoke movingly of the asylum seekers in Southsea and the hostility they were encountering.

FOSC: We are indebted to FOSC for their support for our church. Their fundraising has allowed phase 2 of our roof work to be completed, much needed to ensure that we are weathertight. Future projects include replacing our interior roofing insulation, converting the current toilet to a disabled facility and relocating the kitchen to the meeting room.

Their notable activity last year was 'Hands around the Church' which was part of our Steep 900 celebrations. Aerial photographs of All Saints' were taken with parishioners and village friends holding hands to encircle the church. Over 200 people took part and after enjoyed a buffet lunch with wine, and Anne Groves' marvellous cake with its golden cockerel.

FOSC also hold their annual Carol Concert at the beginning of December. This is always a joyful and lively occasion with both Steep School orchestra and the 'Two Colours' Ukrainian Choir performing to a full congregation. It is celebrated with mince pies and mulled wine after.

5. Fabric of the Churches

Steep Church. Following the Quinquennial report a subcommittee met to prioritise the architect's recommendations with the invaluable help of Hugh Routh. Quotes were obtained for repairs necessary to the valley gutter between the south and north rooves and repairs to the roof slope either side (phase 1). This was carried out last November by Richardson's (Nyewood) Ltd. with architect Julian Vallis as project manager, but with Graham Madgwick keeping a close, almost daily, eye on it all. We were very grateful for Graham's frequent updates and photos of all the work being done. Graham has now taken the role as Chair of the Fabric and Finance Committee.

This spring other areas of the roof and guttering (phase 2) have been made good with the use of a cherry picker, which is more practical than scaffolding in this situation. The only part that will have to be done at a later date is replacing wood in the bell tower. When the

workers looked into doing this the rooks had already established a rookery and laid their eggs. This will now be done later in the year.

It was noticed in October that the gate of the lychgate had been reversed into and damaged. The latch had been bent so that the gate would not close and a piece of wood torn off. The wood was found and the gate mended - many thanks to Hugh Routh.

We also are investigating replacing the interior roof insulation (mainly polystyrene) which in places is dislodged and hope this work will be carried out in the near future (phase 3). It will cause some disruption to the normal use of the church but is essential on health and safety grounds as well as making the church more efficient in maintaining the heat in the building.

The Church Warden has completed a check of the Terrier and Log Book.

Stroud Mission Church. This is largely managed by Angela and Chris Snow with a regular twice a month BCP Holy Communion Service held there, as well as services for Easter, Harvest, Christmas Carols and Christmas Eve. . No specific maintenance was needed this year although a check of the lightning conductor and fire extinguishers was carried out this spring, along with those of All Saints'. PAT testing is also done annually in both churches.

The Church is extremely grateful for the Snow's help with the church and to David Erskine-Hill who has maintained the churchyard.

6. Churchyard

We are in the process of being gifted a strip of land by Bedales adjoining the end of the churchyard, beyond the shed. This long drawn out transaction is almost completed and we will have an extra 900.4 square metres. Many thanks to Geoffrey Dale with his patience in seeing this to completion on our behalf.

David Morris continues to help maintain the grounds on a twice monthly basis or when required. He has pruned trees and shrubs, strimmed and tidied the Ashes area and cleared drains and gutters plus keeping the outside north wall and lychgate swept. He is invaluable to us.

The spraying of the church paths is contracted out to Shrekfeet who are qualified to operate in public spaces and they attend 3 times a year. The outer side of the yews along the church path have been pruned this year. There have been two voluntary working parties (autumn and spring) to tidy the churchyard with the last one particularly well attended, and which left the churchyard looking particularly well kept.

Paul Garstin has kindly managed the mowing in the past, with David tasked with mowing once a month and the rota operating fortnightly in between. David feels that he can manage on his own, though if there was help it would improve the look of the churchyard. Bubbles has also been involved with the care of the churchyard, in particular keeping it generally tidy and marking plots for graves and ashes for the funeral directors. Both of them are now stepping down and we thank them very much for all they have done and welcome Simon Mason who has agreed to take over these roles.

7. 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 ten to twelve. Parish Communion (Common Worship) is every Sunday in either Steep or High Cross with

attendance in Steep averaging forty one. 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 four weddings, five baptisms and thirteen memorial or funeral services during the year.

We welcomed Pippa to her first service on Palm Sunday last March and in April we had well attended Easter services throughout the Benefice. Sunday services continued during the summer with Susie taking most of the services but assisted by Sue, Pippa, Graham and Adrian on occasions. Susie was made Vicar of the Benefice and Sue will be licensed as Assistant Vicar in June this year with similar duties as present.

We also continued our Steep 900 celebrations as noted below.

Our Harvest Festival (in a beautifully decorated church) in October was followed by a very simple lunch eaten at tables in the church itself again, but enjoyed by fewer parishioners than last year. There need to be new ideas to make it a celebration with a theme of generosity.

On Saturday 25th October we held a Benefice Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving for families to remember those who have died, followed by refreshments. Remembrance Sunday was on 9th November, followed by the customary service at the village War Memorial on the following Tuesday. December saw a Carol Service at Stroud and then a full programme of services at Steep – candlelit Midnight Communion and All Age on Christmas Day.

8. Steep 900 Celebrations

I'm sure it was noticed that in November 2024 we embarked on a whole year of activities to mark the founding of a church here in Steep in 1124/5, making us 900 years old. A committee led by Philip Mileham devised a varied programme of events.

A continuation of our Steep 900 celebrations was a service held on Sunday 4th May, celebrating baptism - 'Making a Splash!' Anyone with photographs, christening gowns or other items was encouraged to bring them to the service, and Fran Box had researched the history of our font.

At the end of May Gerald Marlow, our own organist, gave an organ concert at All Saints' Church. He performed a wonderful programme of thirteen pieces spanning composers from the last 300 years. A real bonus was the projection of Gerald's hands and feet onto a screen that allowed the audience to enjoy the extraordinary skill of his playing. It was the first such concert since the refurbishment of the organ and was greatly appreciated proving a real cultural treat in our 900 celebrations.

On 7th and 8th June we celebrated with Steep Open Gardens and on 28th and 29th June there was a Flower Festival in Saints', culminating in Hymns and Pimm's on the Sunday evening. On display were the historical figures designed by a previous vicar, Douglas Snelgar (and brought up to date with new figures from the late 20th century and early 21st century). These were the focus of the flower arrangements through the ages. The evening service included a wide selection of hymns chosen by different organisations within the parish.

On Saturday 11th October Philip Mileham led a six mile walk with ten walkers and three dogs, from Steep to what was our mother Church, All Saints East Meon. The aim of the walk was to remember and retrace in part at least what our forebears would have had to do regularly in order to attend Church in the years prior to 1125. All, including some non-walkers

were welcomed by the vicar Tony Forrest before a brief history of the church was given and finally Tony Forest led a short celebratory to acknowledge our forebears.

The celebrations thus continued during 2025 and ended on All Saints' Sunday 2nd November 2025. Fittingly our guest preacher at that service was Kathryn Percival, Archdeacon of the Meon. Our choir repeated the anthem written by Ellie Thackrey, with music composed by Jonathan Willcocks for our 900 celebrations.

9. 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 met the diocesan Safeguarding Officer for a half day training programme, covering the topics of Basic Safeguarding and Safeguarding in Domestic Abuse, to 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.

10. Thank yous - very important - you are the church.

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 our role so much easier. A special thanks to Gerald Marlow our organist. We also thank Ellie Thackrey, who has led the choir and who, very sadly, we will soon be losing. We would like to congratulate Peter on his appointment as Head of Ditcham School and wish them and their family all the very best for the future.

Thank you to Jessica Pocock and Selina Garstin who oversee the flower decorations with their team of arrangers, not only for the regular arrangements and the festivals of Easter, Harvest and Christmas but also for occasional weddings and funerals. Selina also has led the Social Committee who help on numerous occasions such as the Edward Thomas teas and the Steep Lecture.

There are many more thank yous, to the sidesmen, chalice bearers, and intercessionists who faithfully contribute to our worship; to our cleaner Linda Bennett who quietly keeps the dust, dirt and cobwebs at bay; to our Sacristan Gill Wicksteed and Deirdre Mitchell who manage altar cloths and all the linen, and launder vestments; to the Thackreys who open the church each morning during term time and Sarah Hoskins in the holidays, and the team of volunteers who close the church each evening.

Thank you to Caroline Robinson and helpers who produce the monthly magazine and the people who distribute and deliver it; to David and Carole Kidd and their helpers who ensure we are fed and watered after the parish communion services and on other occasions. And on special occasions, and now seemingly more often, thanks to Hugh and Mo Routh who ring our bells for us. (And with a full peal to mark the end of our Steep 900 celebrations).

I also have a heartfelt thank you for Heather Maybury who, in the absence of another church warden, has helped me enormously. She already organises the complex rota of volunteers for the church services, but also prompts them and steps in where necessary. I can always turn to her for common sense advice and help and that has been invaluable - thank you.

Lastly a big thank you to Susie who oversees us all, helped enormously I know, by Sue, Pippa, Graham and Adrian.

Judy. April 2026