

All Saints, Sproughton 2026 Rector's Report

Firstly, it is fitting to say a heartfelt thanks to everyone who works hard to keep this Christian community going. Without our volunteers All Saints Church would not be able to serve the people of Sproughton and provide a Christian presence in the community. I also want to say a huge thanks to Phil who stepped down as churchwarden, I am sure you will join me in expressing how grateful we are for all he has done for the church. I thank God for you all.

It goes without saying that this has been a difficult year for us at All Saints. The closure of the church during the repairs was far from ideal and certainly disrupted the pattern of services. I am overawed by the generosity of everyone who donated to fund the repair work. Your support for the building enabled the work to be completed on time and thankfully on budget. As those of you on the PCC are aware, we are not out of the woods regarding repairs. We need to consider another area of damage between the nave and the tower which requires repairs to be carried out in the very near future.

I have spent this year getting to know the congregations and churches as I have gradually settled into life in Suffolk. This has been a time of listening and observing as well as learning. It is very clear that we have things to celebrate, but there are many challenges facing us in the Benefice, and in All Saints in particular. It is important that we do not shy away from these challenges, we need to confront them and be realistic about what we can and can't do. The challenges are not uncommon and are faced by most churches in the UK. These include, lack of funds, dwindling congregations, ancient buildings, shortage of volunteers to fill key roles, and lack of clergy. With this in mind, we need to face the reality that during 2026 we must change. My aim is to ensure that each congregation has one Eucharistic service and at least one other service per month. Thanks to Revd Tony, we can have two services at All Saints. One service being the main 11.00 Parish Eucharist and the other being a café style service in the hall. The aim of this is to provide an accessible and informal place for worship, fellowship and support in the community. If we want to increase the number of services at Sproughton, we will need at least one Lay Elder and a permanent churchwarden. Hopefully, we will be able to consider this in the next couple of years.

Despite the closure of the church, services continued in the Hall. The regular Christmas services were held with numbers attending being encouraging. Of course we would all like to have carol services, Christingles, Crib Services etc. But we need to be realistic as to what a very small number of people can achieve with limited resources. Sometimes Advent becomes Christmas and there is a need to fill every spare moment with activity. I am a great believer in quality over quantity when it comes to services of worship. Reflecting on Advent and Christmas services across the whole Benefice, I believe that we are all far too busy and are in danger of missing the whole point of the season. Last Easter services were well attended, and I was particularly pleased with the numbers who came to our service on Good Friday. Likewise,

Harvest and Remembrance services conducted this year by Revd Tony because I was at Belstead and Copdock respectively. Again, thanks to everyone who enabled these services to continue. It is apparent that we need to look at all our services with a view to attracting more people who would not otherwise go to church.

Much of my work in Sproughton is centred around the school, nursery, and toddler group. This is very much in line with the Diocesan imperative to "Grow younger". Unless we can increase our congregation size, the future will be very uncertain. I am delighted to say that many of the children and their families are engaging with me both in school and in the community. We have already had one baptism request from the toddler group. There continues to be a lot of positive feedback from the primary school where I am a governor. In school I take assemblies, work with the Faith Council, support pupils pastorally, and provide a listening ear for staff. Naturally the details of a lot of my work have to remain confidential, please be assured that I spend a lot of my time engaged in pastoral work in the school and the community. Church exists for the wider community as well as those who regularly attend services. I run a bereavement group once per month for anyone suffering the impact of the death of a loved one. This is a confidential group which provides support, and a place to share feelings. Anyone from the community and beyond can attend this group.

In the absence of a churchwarden, most of the administration has been taken on by myself and Ralph. I would like to thank Ralph for his continued support which is much appreciated. The building repair work took up a lot of my time during the last few months to the extent that I cancelled holidays and worked on my days off. Fortunately, my husband was able to assist with project management of the work and liaising with builder and architect. This included regular site visits, with a lot of climbing ladders to view the work.

All Saints continues to have a regular number of funerals and burials of ashes. However, we have not had any weddings or baptisms in Sproughton. The Benefice probably has more weddings than any other in Suffolk and these take up a considerable amount of time. I again thank Revd Tony for helping conduct some of these occasional offices.

During the year I have completed the Suffolk Ministry Development Programme, it is a requirement for all clergy in the Diocese to do this course. I have attended the Leading Your Church into Growth two-day conference, and the national conference on Rural Ministry which was held in Bury St Edmonds. Due to having to conduct a funeral, I was forced to cancel my annual retreat. I intend to have a retreat in November 2026; it is a Diocesan recommendation that clergy take a retreat every year.

I am currently working on Sproughton's Plan for Growth and have met with the ministry team and churchwardens across the Benefice. We need to get the small things in church and in the community right. The church doesn't just exist for those who attend on Sundays. As Revd Tony reminded us at the ministry meeting, are we a yacht club or a lifeboat station. Church should not be a yacht club; it should be a lifeboat station. One of the key things I want us all to work

on is our welcome. As a church, are we welcoming? I must say we don't always get our welcome right. Our 11.00 Eucharist will have some changes for it to be more family orientated and attract younger people who wouldn't usually come to church. More details of this will be available during 2026.

I am delighted to say that the Benefice has three people going through the discernment process to become Lay elders/Lay Readers. Currently, there is not an even distribution of Lay Elders across the Benefice, it is something which I am looking at solving. It would be good if someone from All Saint's were to consider if they have a vocation to Lay Leadership, or ordained ministry. Whilst there are challenges and there will be changes, I am positive and hopeful for the future of All Saint's Church Sproughton.

In the coming year I would like to work with you to:

Help and support each other to grow together in holiness.

Make All Saint's Sproughton a place where all people feel welcomed and cared for.

Be accessible to the community and be part of it.