

ALL SAINTS WHITSTABLE “Understanding All Saints and its Missionary Environment”



All Saints Whitstable is one of five churches in the Whitstable Team Ministry. This Team Ministry has been in existence since 1984.

It can be described as a church with both charismatic and moderate Anglo-Catholic influences, with a eucharistic focus. A team of servers, a choir and a music group lie at the heart of the worship at our main 10.30am Sung Holy Communion each Sunday. This is augmented by the presence of All-Age Family Services, for example at Mothering Sunday, Harvest, and Remembrance Sunday, which help reach out to a wider section of our community.

Traditionally we have had good contacts with young families and children and youth both at these festival services and at Christmas and through our regular weekly “Adventurers” Sunday Club. However, the pandemic has had an effect, similar to many churches, in needing us to relaunch our focus and our appointment of a Children and Families Minister working for 20 hours a week is very much part of that.

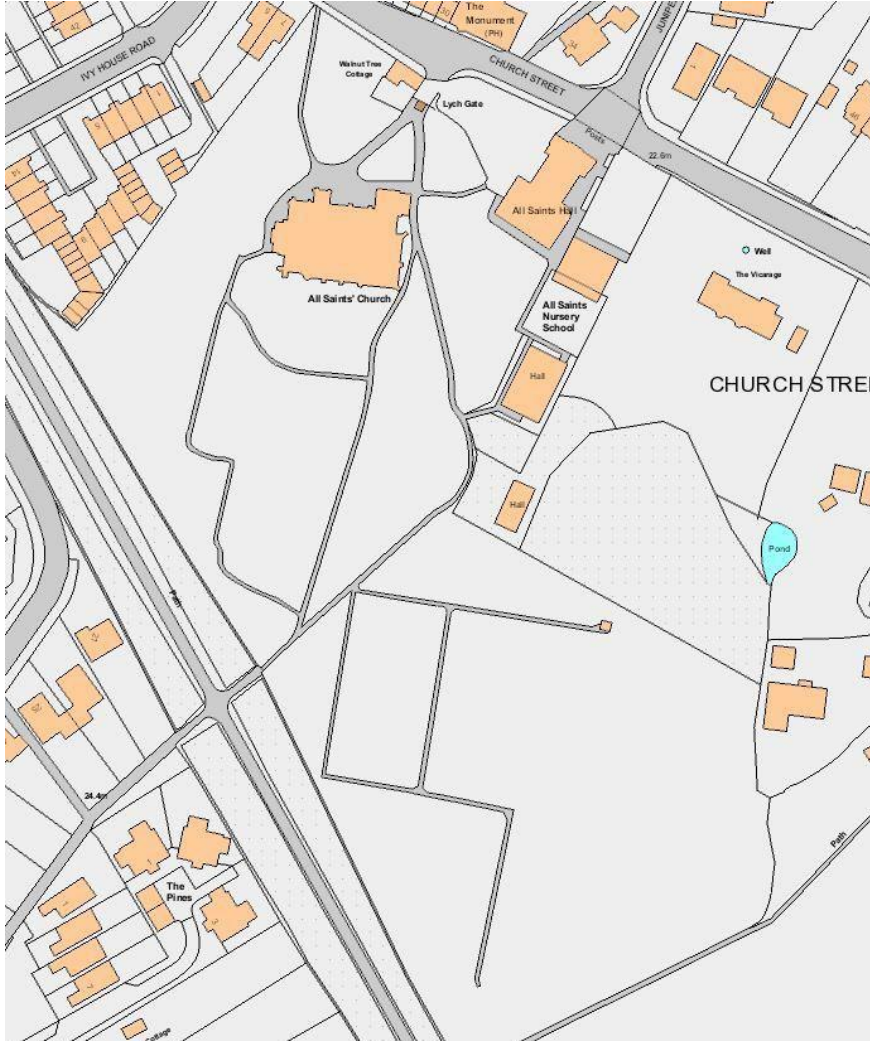
Before the pandemic, we ran a successful Wednesday morning Parent and Toddler Group called “Tiny Singers” and After school Parent and Junior age child activity club called “Holyballoo” on Thursday afternoons. Both of these are currently suspended though we hope to relaunch them in 2022.

We do have the beginnings of a successful Youth club known as “Shine” on Monday evenings which we hope will continue to grow during the early months of 2022.

Our Sunday Club “Adventurers” currently is only attracting a few families and we are hoping that this will be able to recover as we move out of the pandemic in 2022.

UNDERSTANDING ALL SAINTS WHITSTABLE AND ITS MISSION TO ITS AREA

Mission as Incarnation – a gathered community both religious and secular, creating bridges with our parish that allow mission to take place effectively



Plan of All Saints church and churchyard and surrounding buildings

All Saints Whitstable is largely based on its contact with the community and its use of its church buildings and other buildings and contacts on its campus. Understanding how we work as a campus in our entirety is the best way of understanding how All Saints works in terms of mission to our pastoral district and also how we build community spirit in our neighbourhood – vital to mission in a largely secular society.

There are of course other aspects to our mission not tied directly to our plant, but the focus on our gathered community should help a prospective Children and Families Minister understand how we “tick” as a church community. We aim to include this document in the publicity we send out to any prospective candidates.

A. CHURCH BUILDING as a centre for worship and mission



The Church building is at the forefront of our mission. We have a strong team of Sidespeople, Bellringers and Servers and an average sized but committed Choir and Music group. The church is used for a variety of outreach and pastoral services each year

- A. Sunday morning congregations at the 8am and 10am services. 8am is Book of Common Prayer Communion. 10.30am is Sung Holy Communion with Servers, Robed Choir and Music Group.
Currently around 60-80 adults across both Sunday morning services, (down from 100-120 before the pandemic) with numbers of children ranging from 2 to 8 children per week for normal Sundays and up to 50 for our parade services where the uniformed organisations are present . The services tend to be reasonably formal with some informality at times.
There is a mix of modern and traditional music at the 10.30 am service. The church has both a paid Organist and a paid Director of Music.

As well as our Team Vicar, Rev Simon Tillotson, who is also based at St John's Swalecliffe, All Saints also has a two Readers, Denise Blaskett, and Jayne Edinboro and a number of retired clergy who assist at our services. A number of other lay leaders also help us lead our worship.

- B. Thursday morning congregation – currently around 10-15 adults attend per week with prayer for healing. This service is a quiet and spiritual time in the middle of a busy week. We have seen the arrival of new and younger members of the our community at this service in recent months.
- C. Compline – this service is hoping to be reintroduced in 2022.
- D. Choral Evensong – on selected months on 4th Sunday at 6.30pm. Again this service is hoping to be reintroduced in 2022.
- E. Sacred Space – a regular meditative event which is a Fresh Expression, once a month, which before the pandemic attracted between 10 and 20 people. This is also advertised to churches in Whitstable as a “Churches Together in Whitstable” ministry. We are hoping to relaunch this service also in 2022
- F. Weddings / Prayer and Dedication following a Civil Marriage / Renewal of Vows—about 10-20 a year on average. These are an important point of outreach and ministry to our community. Although they take up a lot of preparation and administrative time they are vital points of connection with our community and a key part of our mission. Our Marriage Preparation is both done in terms of an Admin day at All Saints and also collectively in the Team looking at building long- lasting marriages.
- G. Baptisms / Thanksgivings for a Gift of a Child – before the pandemic these stood at about 30-40 a year on average. We invite Baptism families to attend the Family Communion the week after the baptism to receive a welcome from the congregation. This invitation is accepted in the majority of cases. Our Baptism policy is to be welcoming and affirming and to focus more on follow up after the Baptism than asking people to cross too many bridges beforehand. We encourage our Baptism families and Wedding families receive our monthly e-newsletter as a way of keeping in touch with them.
- H. Funerals / Memorial services/ Interments of ashes – either followed or preceded by burial in our churchyard or local cemetery, or committal at Crematorium – about 20-40 a year, these play in important part of our ministry to our community. Please see section on churchyard for more information.

I. Special Services and events at the church

- a) Advent and Christmas services – in pre Pandemic times over 1100 adults and children attended these. The size of these services reflects the potential All Saints has to reach out to our community. We involve local groups such as The First Whitstable Scout Group Band in these services.
- b) Holy Week and Easter services – attendance varies but usually about 200 in attendance on Easter Day. We have a popular Agape Supper on Maundy Thursday, a united Church procession through the town on Good Friday morning, a Three Hours At the Cross on Good Friday afternoon, and as well as the Easter Sunday Holy Communion services we have a popular dawn service on Tankerton Beach each Sunday morning, sometimes taking place as early as 5am.
- c) Remembrance Sunday service – in pre pandemic times attendance usually well over 250. This is attended by all our uniformed organisations which meet on our campus – Brownies, Guides, Cubs, Scouts, Rangers and Beavers.
- d) Mothering Sunday service and Harvest – in pre pandemic times attendance usually over 200
- e) Annual Service of Remembrance for the Dearly Departed – attendance about 50-100 (see section on Churchyard)
- f) Other services when required during the year
- g) The church is sometimes used for concerts by other groups such as the Oyster Singers and we have run various concerts for fundraising ourselves at the church in recent years, including a recent concert by the Canterbury Cathedral Boys Choir for our Churchyard paths appeal.
- h) We also have used the church as a place for debate within the community, including hosting a very well attended debate on the Eu Referendum in April 2016.
- i) Our Archives, some based at the church and based at Canterbury Cathedral, show that we have hosted weddings and baptisms for five centuries or more., though we are aware the church has hosted these since the 13th century or earlier.

As such it is a busy church with a strong worshipping base and good outreach to our community. In terms of the Fabric of the church we have recently completely refurbished our Church organ and over recent years have restored one of the windows of the church and renewed some of the electrical system inside the church. As a large church we often have a lot of expense to maintain it in good condition. The outside stonework of the church is currently experiencing a major overhaul due to water ingress which should be completed in the summer of 2022 before we turn our attention to the need to decorate the interior of the church.

Areas of weakness and strength. Our congregation is made up mainly of retired people. We have seen a growth in the 10am service in recent years which has led to a good and buoyant atmosphere at our 10am service with much positive feedback. Our mix of worship group and choir is generally well received.

We believe however that we need to strengthen our family and children's groups and our Sunday Club group and for this reason the Church Council has decided to employ a 20 hours a week Children and Families' Minister from the summer of 2022.

Our Sunday Club is currently regular and faithful and we would like to see it grow further.

Another of the aims and objectives behind the appointment of a part time Children and Families' Minister is to increase the amount of social events in the life of the church for the younger section of our community, to build up new initiatives that will reach out to young people in our community.

We particularly would encourage our new Children and Families's Minister to find ways of developing closer links with our All Saints Nursery families and staff and also with the Uniformed organisations (scouts, brownies etc) who have been on our campus for many years.

The arrival of a Ministry Leadership Team at All Saints over recent years will act as a way of focusing the work of the Children and Families's Minister and supporting them in their work and ministry, under their line manager, our Vicar.

B. CHURCH HALL



All Saints Hall is in many ways just as important to our outreach as the church itself. We run a number of groups from there which make sure we are a 7 days a week church. These include

- 1) In pre pandemic times, weekly groups such as Cameo, (a coffee, cake and tea and chat group) played an important part in our outreach to older people. Our Film Club has relaunched and currently about 20 adults attend each week.
- 2) Monthly groups such as Mother's Union and our Singing for Fun and Health group, the latter of which easily attracts over 60 adults at its popular singalong, though for reasons to do with the pandemic it is currently suspended.

- 3) Regular social activities such as our Christmas Fayre, and our Barn Dance, Harvestsupper, and Quiz nights which are all invariably sold out.
- 4) The church hall also is our base for our Sunday Club for children , and for our coffee and tea time after our 10.30am Sunday eucharist.
- 5) The hall is also used by the church for the hosting of Pantomimes which we put on in order to reach out to our community.
- 6) The hall has been used in the past for discussion groups and Alpha courses run by the Vicar. Numerous of these have been run both at the Vicarage and Thorpe Room in the Church hall over recent years.
- 7) In addition to these church groups the hall is used by a huge range of other groups which include fitness groups, slimming groups, badminton groups and so on.

These groups are important to our mission not only because they bring in important revenue to the church. They also mean that people know about our existence as a church and so when we advertise our own events people are aware of the location of All Saints and are more familiar with our surroundings.

Areas of weakness and strength. The hall clearly is a huge asset to the church and it has been wonderful to see how various ministries that are catering to the community's needs have developed in recent years, both involving projects run by ourselves and projects run by others. We do though believe we need to provide more activities for children and young people and hence our desire to relaunch our Parent and Toddler group and our after school group as well as build up our Monday evening Shine group and Sunday morning Adventurers group.

c. CHURCH GROUNDS AND CHURCHYARD (see map on page 2)

Our huge churchyard – the second largest in the whole of the Diocese we are led to understand - is a place of great sadness but also great beauty. It is a significant area and requires us to employ a groundsman to keep the grass and trees and other growth under control.



The churchyard has burials which go back five or six hundred years. It also has one or two heritage landmarks including the famous Wyn Ellis Mausoleum, where Wyn Ellis, famous landowner and 19th century MP is buried. All Saints also has the grave of Rev Henry Maugham, uncle of Somerset Maugham. The famous author was effectively brought up by his uncle and attended All Saints regularly in his youth.



The Wyn Ellis Mausoleum

The churchyard is also a place of significant connection with our parish due to the large number of burials and interments of ashes in our churchyard. Unlike many churchyards in the Diocese, All Saints churchyard has enough room left for possibly 30 more years of burials. There are approximately 30 burials or interments a year currently.

Although we do not like to see this aspect of our ministry as part of our evangelistic outreach, as our focus is naturally on caring and supporting those in grief, we are grateful to God that he has given us this serious responsibility and we are aware that the ministry does give us the opportunity to witness about our belief that death is not the end and that with faith there is always hope.

With this respect, our Annual Service of Remembrance for the Dearly Departed is an important point of connection with those who grieve, but we cannot underestimate the importance of meeting parishioners and talking to them on their way to visit graves as part of our ministry.

In the Spring of 2018 we resurfaced many of our churchyard paths as well as our Shirley Hall car park, following the resurfacing of our main church car park in 2017. This is one of several large capital projects we have embarked on in recent years to ensure we are keeping our overall church plant in good condition for the future. All Saints takes its duty to maintain the upkeep of its plant extremely seriously.

D. THE NEW SHIRLEY HALL – now normally referred to as All Saints Nursery School, and the SCOUT HUT



We mention both of these in the same sub section as they are run by committees that are independent of All Saints. Both pay a rent to All Saints DCC who as landlords are responsible for the upkeep of both buildings. the land on which both buildings is based belongs not to the Diocese but to the Whitstable PCC.

The New Shirley Hall was built in 2010 to 2011 after All Saints church were successful in raising £270,000 after its previous building on the same site fell into disrepair. It is here that the All Saints Nursery school runs full time, five days a week. It has an Outstanding Ofsted report and is much admired by the wider community.

One of the reasons why the church wishes to employ a Children and Families Minister is that we want to strengthen our relationship with the All Saints Nursery School. The vicar has led acts of worship in the church with the preschool children many times in the past, and the children often come and sing at our Singing for Fun and Health and some have attended our Holyballoo and Sunday morning Adventurers group with their parents. However, we feel a new employee would give new energy to strengthening the relationship between the Church and the Nursery school and hopefully start a new initiative which would build on what is happening already.

Exactly the same logic applies to the uniformed organisations – the Scout and Cubs and Beavers who meet at the Scout Hut, and the Brownies and Guides who meet in the Church hall. We would like to strengthen our links with these and we feel that the appointment of a Children and Families Minister would help us to do this.

E. ALL SAINTS VICARAGE AND GARDEN



All Saints Vicarage and garden have been at the heart of the All Saints community since the Vicarage was built in the mid 1920's. Many of our sub-committees' work is spent planning for events that run at the Vicarage garden each year, and the use

of the Vicarage garden has grown in recent years as the Church Council have recognised the importance of it as a missionary resource. It needs to be noted that although we have plenty of land around the church, it is all churchyard land, and so cannot be used for recreation due to pastoral sensitivities.

The vital importance of open air missionary activity is underscored by the size and success of the various events that we put on in the Vicarage garden each year.

These activities include:



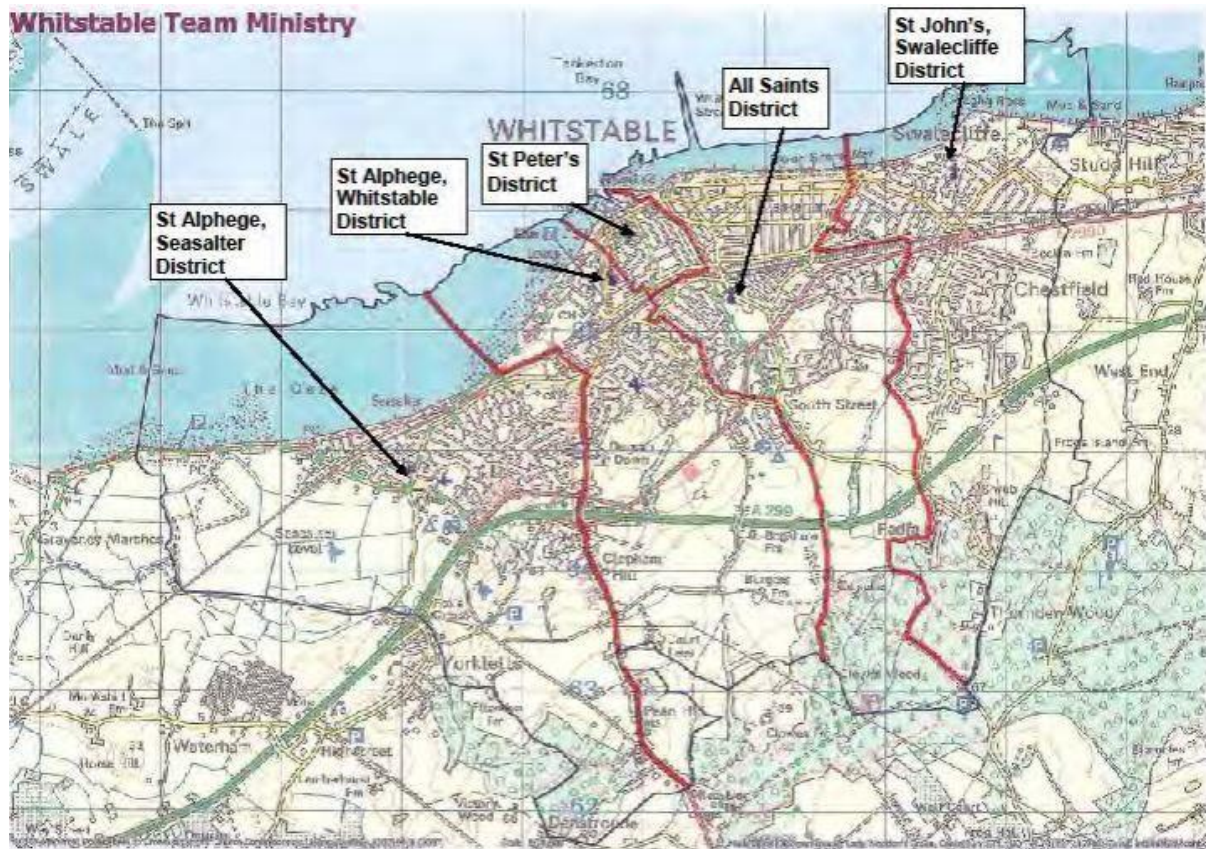
- 1) Our annual firework night, going back at least 20 years. This attracted approximately 500 adults and children from our surrounding area. It is an important form of outreach but also an important community builder within the church community. We see a direct connection between the size and scope of this and our aim to maintain an important relationship with our community. We were able to run this in 2021 after a break in 2020.
- 2) Our annual Summer Fair, going back to the 1920s . This attracts a very large number of adults and children each year. Again, the planning of this is an important community builder within the church community. It would be impossible to run such an event just in our Church hall or in our churchyard and so we are very grateful that we have the garden as a resource for this important outreach event.
- 3) A Picnic Eucharist, when our vicar celebrated the Eucharist in the garden and we had a picnic together as a congregation. This has affirmed the importance of creation as well as redemption in our theology as a church. A recent Celtic pilgrimage to Iona and Holy Island, Northumbria, has further helped us in our thinking about the importance of God's creation to our understanding of who God our creator is. The Picnic Eucharist earths this in a real life setting of a garden.
- 4) A Pet Blessing Service, now in its 15th year, when people from the surrounding area bring their pets for a Sunday morning service. Like the Picnic eucharist, this again affirms a healthy creation focussed theology which links in with our exploration of Celtic Christian themes as a church.

- 5) Various BBQs including the annual Vicar and Churchwardens BBQ. These prove invaluable in terms of building up and maintaining our existing links with our wider fringe as a church and in nurturing the social life of our community.
- 6) The All Saints Nursery school run a Sports Day each year and host other events in the garden. They look out onto the garden from one of their windows. The Vicarage garden is also used as an escape area for the Nursery school.
- 7) The Brownies and Guides have from time to time used our Garden for their own events.
- 8) We have hosted a number of concerts in the Vicarage garden including community groups and charities which have made use of it.
- 9) Our three decade long partnership with a group of churches in Germany takes place in Whitstable once every four years and we regularly hold events in the Vicarage garden for this. In the past we have had camps of youths from this exchange in the Vicarage garden.
- 10) Fun days for Children from the community have also taken place from time to time in the Vicarage garden

We believe that the appointment of a Children and Families' Minister will enable more ways the garden can be used in mission. One idea our current Sunday Club leaders have for the coming year is to do a wildlife survey of the woods and pond at the foot of the vicarage garden, as we have seen a family of foxes live there in the last year. We know that some natterjack toads and crested newts were found in the neighbouring pond at the Community College and we would like to explore if similar wildlife is to be found in the Vicarage pond at the foot of the garden.

The garden in short is a resource which is very dear to us as a church and around which many of our planning meetings revolve each month, even in the winter months. We are grateful to God that we have this as an asset and we are determined to use it for God's glory.

OUR WIDER GEOGRAPHICAL IMPORTANCE



As a Team Church we have a wider responsibility to work together with the other team churches in Whitstable. We do this in many ways, not least through the agreement that our Vicar should spend some of this time also as Team Vicar of St John's Swalecliffe – even though we could comfortably afford a full-time Team Vicar. We also give generously to the Team Formula each year which allows the current level of ministry to continue over the Team.

We are aware that we have a particular duty to our pastoral district area that is shown in the map above. This has a population of about 10,000.

We do this in a number of ways

- 1) We regularly visit the sick and ill in nursing home and residential homes in our pastoral district and elsewhere in the Team, using our strong team of Pastoral visitors. Our current Team, numbering seven pastoral assistants, visit people in their homes throughout the pastoral district, taking communion to care homes and to private homes, and also visiting people who have a connection with All Saints who live beyond our pastoral district borders.

Our pastoral ministry is underscored by the giving of prayer shawls. Our Prayer Shawl group now makes a huge number of prayer shawls that go out

to our community and wider afield, especially to those who are sick and poorly. In addition to this we give large cards signed by our congregation on almost a weekly basis to those we know are sick or poorly and who would appreciate a card.

- 2) Our vicar has till recently been a governor at the Community College Whitstable which is the only Secondary School in Whitstable and is within our pastoral district. This plays an important point in connecting us with our wider mission field.
- 3) We sadly do not have a primary school in our pastoral district which we can connect with, though our Vicar does take assemblies at two other primary schools in Whitstable outside our pastoral district .
- 4) We have the Whitstable and Tankerton Hospital within our pastoral district which many of our parishioners go to for treatment and which has residential wards which we visit when we have a contact there who we know would appreciate a visit.
- 5) We regularly deliver fliers around our pastoral district, advertising our church and community groups
- 6) We take social media very seriously and are often putting our sermons and other events on our church Facebook page and website. Our e-newsletter goes to several hundred people in our community every week. We stream our Sunday mornings on Youtube every Sunday.

CONCLUSIONS

We believe that All Saints is very unusual in being a community that is placed in a geographical setting with significant open space and significant church buildings and grounds to maintain, as this Mission Plan has shown. This may seem to be simply a physical observation but it has a spiritual side to it too.

In years gone by, communities existed through people living side by side and literally bumping into each other. These days, communities exist online and through planned meetings. There is not the day to day interaction that living together in close proximity can allow.

However, we believe our campus at All Saints is different from the pre-arranged more anonymous culture of our present age. We believe that the All Saints plant gives the church an extraordinary advantage in terms of its mission. By being a campus, a gathered community, we are able to facilitate mission and share the love of Christ in a unique way by creating a sense of a gathered community that is not simply about attending church services but is about being one gathered community on campus. It is a community that loves and accepts people because we are all part of God's creation, and so our various groups, churches and non churched, are a celebration of this reality.

However, we are not apathetic. We still have an age profile which features mainly in the 60 plus age category and it is for this reason that we are wishing to employ a Children and Families Minister to help grow our younger section of our community

and our Sunday Club and other groups – and also to set up new initiatives too.

This paper has not covered every area of church life but it is hopefully a good expression of our current life and will help explain our focus to any prospective candidate for our Children and Families Minister vacancy. It has been written with this appointment specially in mind.

All Saints Ministry Leadership Team

December 2021