

Sermon for Vision Sunday 2026 – 6 September

Each year in September I give a sermon about what I think God has planned for All Saints and having been here now for 5 and half years I have taken this opportunity to look back on the 5 years that I have been here.

I think when you have been part of a place for a while, and I know my 5 years are a drop in the ocean compared to how long some of you have been here – especially those of you who tell me that you witnessed your house being built as a child! You sometimes can't see the small changes that we have made here and that a lot of it becomes something we have already done.

One change in particular is our Vision of All Are Welcome. This is something that is woven throughout the entire life of All Saints. Whether that be being welcomed at the door for a church service, or with a hot drink at our weekly groups, or in any other way over the many different events we have here at church and across the road we strive to make sure whoever walks through the door, know that they are welcomed and affirmed regardless of where they are in the journey of faith, or even if the thought of faith has crossed their mind, all are welcome.

When we welcome at our door, to our building and beyond the walls, we have that culture of welcoming people and making them feel part of the community here at All Saints. One big change we made was moving the tea and coffee into the church. It started back in the days of Covid so that we could still enjoy fellowship, but we weren't all squished into a small room. More people stay, more tea and coffee are poured, and it appears none you have homes to go to – one particular delight was to hear one of church wardens yell for those stragglers to leave because the lights were off, the main door was locked, and we were sure you all had lunch to get back too.

That culture of chatting and catching up after the service is part of making our church welcome, a place people can come and share their worries, share their joys and ask questions. Even Bishop Sam said that it's great to hear and see the development and growth of All Saints!

As part of our welcome, we want to provide opportunities for people to come, last year we had our Christmas Tree Festival this year we are taking a break, but we will back next year, I think. It's a chance for schools and local businesses to come and have a nosy around our church. Just one story of how someone's grandchild made an ornament for their school they popped in and then felt comfortable to come back to a funeral later on in the year having spent many years avoiding church.

We provide a non-judgemental environment for people to come and explore and this person hasn't made the journey to join a service here at church but the point (and I know this can be controversial) is not for people to make it to the pew on a Sunday morning but the point is for people to meet with God.

To meet with God on a Sunday morning – which we have had a lot of people join us, or on a Wednesday lunchtime or on a Saturday afternoon. I am aware that the tradition of church on a Sunday morning doesn't work for everyone and its often the time when people are at sport groups, grabbing their shopping, or spending time with family. So, with that in mind I am looking to start a more informal service with a different style to our other services in the evening on a Sunday. I haven't got a definite start time for this as we might be linking up with other churches in the area who are also part of the inclusive church network.

We are making the decision at our September PCC as to whether we join the Inclusive Church Network. As a reminder the to the Inclusive Church network, gives us the opportunity to place posters up with a recognisable logo for people to know that this is a safe church and to be a church which **celebrates and affirms every person** and does not discriminate – something that we already state. To be a church that doesn't discriminate against disability, economic power, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity or sexuality.

To sign up to this network means people can look up for an inclusive church and find us and know that they can come here and be welcomed without judgement.

Our church worship team is going to look very different this coming year as well. We have welcomed our Curate Jo to the team and in the coming months Simon Mitchell will be beginning his training to be a Reader so you will see him pop up from time to time. We also have others exploring their calling so will see others too. With all the excitement of those starting up we next Sunday see the retirement of Pat as our Reader – I am not going to say much about that right now as I am also preaching next week!

But there is a lot of change happening at the leadership level here at All Saints and it is exciting to see. A healthy church is one where people feel they can explore their calling and train, practice, fail and succeed. But as a lot of change is happening I will say things may get a bit bumpy and I will be honest in front of you all right now – I might forget things you've told me which are important, I might say things when I am tired that I didn't mean in the tone I said and I ask for your grace and forgiveness but also to tell me if I have forgotten and also tell me if I have upset you – I am never beyond correction – just ask Janet Ashman!

So, I have mentioned inside the church our welcome at the door of our vision but what about our building? I know the plaster or the paint or whatever is on the walls is falling off. We are starting to look a bit tatty around the edges and above my head! Andrew and I are going to meet with our Architect to talk through the repairs and also to reenvision the library corner. This is not a quick fix, but we are working towards it. We are also looking at getting our lights changed to be more cost and eco-efficient and possibly change the fixtures so that the bulbs are a bit easier to change!

Behind the scenes we are in need of more formal admin support. We have had a small group of volunteers look after a lot of our admin and website/social media support but the church has grown and so has the paperwork and connections online. We are in need of

some help, and we need to have the finances to pay for this and the repairs and the general day to day of running our parish.

And so, I ask as I always do that if you give to prayerfully consider your giving and perhaps increase it if you can. If you give weekly to prayerfully consider moving to standing order monthly – this helps us to plan our budgets better and if you don't currently give to prayerfully consider to begin giving. Money is a hard subject to talk about and it is a private matter how much you give to All Saints – I don't know who gives and the amounts, but I am someone who also gives. I am not asking this from a place of me wanting more money for myself, I see it a bit like the house kitty.

If you have any questions about giving or even leaving a legacy talk to Kate Hughes our Treasurer. We all come and worship God here, we all call this our church home, we love God, love the people who come, and we love our building that's peeling at the edges. In our own homes we give to the common money pot to pay for bills etc and it's no different here at church.

Money helps keep the lights on which is important (otherwise I will be handing out the candles for Christmas all year round) but more importantly our money helps build the kingdom of God in this part of Cheadle Hulme. It allows people to be welcomed and introduced to God who they may never have had the opportunity to do so before because we are generous with what we have been blessed with.

We have seen our church grow, we have seen what happens when we trust God, our generous with our time and our money and I will be cheeky and say I want more. I want to see more people come and find a home here, to come and encounter Jesus, to know that they are welcomed, celebrated and affirmed regardless of where they are on their journey of faith. Amen.

Rev Sarah Hancock.