**The Astwell Benefice**

*Helmdon with Stuchbury and Radstone, and Syresham with Whitfield,Lois Weedon with Weston and Plumpton and Wappenham*

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Finance Committee – Minutes 15/1/24

**Present:** Philip Thompson, Alice Palmer, Claire Bonner, Clive Johnson, Hugh White

**Apologies** : Ann Netten, Brenda Faragher, Sue TImmis

The meeting opened with a prayer.

**Minutes**

We agreed the minutes from 11/12/23 adding CJs apologies

**Matters Arising**

* Whitfield do not yet have SelectaDNA as they have a tiled roof. There was some discussion as to whether to get it for other items around the church. CB to consider.
* The institution collection has been sent to the diocese.
* AP is struggling to get QR codes working PT advised that it is best to use the phone app. CJ to look into this for Lois too.

Action AP CJ

**Parish & Benefice Accounts**

We shared our reports of our finances over the past year and discussed any figures of interest. Balance sheets for the Benefice and each Parish had been distributed to everyone these can now be passed to Accounts Examiners who will need to be content with the full accounts, as well as balance sheets and reports that are included in the APCM report. End of meeting notes auditing should take place in February so that AP can put the Finance report together for approval by the BPCC in March.

Action ALL

**High/Lowlights**

Regular giving has decreased in all parishes (albeit sometimes only slightly) apart from Whitfield, which was stable. There are also some parishes where the bulk of regular giving relies on just a few folk. We agreed that at the next meeting we should agree a strategy to address this. AP will source previous leaflets sent out showing the need for finances to support the work of the church. CB will also look for the latest letter Whitfield sent out.

Action AP CB

Wappenham and Helmdon held successful fundraising events. Syresham were disappointed with their fete and bazaar results largely due to the weather. Lois continues to hold successful coffee mornings but missed out on the plant sale in 2023. Whitfield are also looking to revitalise their activities next year, which will be helped if the village hall is enhanced. They were well supported at the Mexican evening in 2023.

Helmdon’s quinquennial appears not to have raised too many issues, they will know more in the near future and this will determine whether their Friends can convert their loan to a gift. Wappenham face maintenance expenses 2024. These include quinquennial work on the south roof and work on the churchyard. Whitfield are due for a Quinquennial inspection in November. Lois and Syresham continue to work on their Chancel Window and steeple respectively, hoping the works will be completed this spring. After this Lois plan to work on their servery. AP agreed to look out the original plans for the Syresham servery.

Action AP

General discussions were held on welcoming folk into church for all sorts of reasons – e.g. the Wappenham History Month. Just to get more people to enjoy and value our heritage.

During discussions it became apparent that there is some confusion about where legal responsibilities lie with regard to finances and buildings in the Joint Benefice. We think probably finances with the BPCC and buildings with the church councils. We need to have this clarified and AP will bring it up at the next BPCC meeting.

Action AP/HW

**PARISH SHARE**

We agreed that as the Benefice has budgeted £5000 towards the Parish Share it would be sensible to increase their percentage contribution from 5 to 7%, decreasing other parishes by 1/2 or 1/4%. This doesn’t make much difference to those who are struggling to meet their targets but keeps Helmdon just below £24,000 and Wappenham just below £10,000 – a gesture of help at least.



HW commented that meeting the Parish Share seemed a much higher priority in his previous parishes. AP explained that it had be so in earlier years in Astwell until our share suddenly increased by 20% at which point we somewhat lost heart. We agreed that now the Parish Share is rising by more reasonable amounts we should make more effort to meet it.

**AOB none?**

**NEXT MEETING** : Monday TBC in June 2pm @ Vine Cottage.