**HELMDON CHURCH COUNCIL (HCC) MEETING AT 24 WAPPENHAM ROAD HELMDON**

**MONDAY 15 JANUARY 2024**

Present

Cliff Netten (in the Chair) Fiona Mason Rebecca Mount Ann Netten Niki Phillips Wiggy Smith Vanessa Vicars

The Meeting began with a prayer.

Apologies for absence

Penny Bonner Bill Elkington Judith Elkington Jenny Saunders Paul Stothard

Minutes of the last Meeting (13 November 2023) and Matters Arising

The Minutes were Agreed as a true record. Matters Arising were:

* We discussed the Christmas Fair, which had been a great success, thanks to all the help from volunteers in setting up the Reading Room and Grotto, baking cakes, lending a hand where needed. We were also grateful for the enthusiastic help of Aiden, Santa’s Elf on the day!
* Carol singing at the pub had been another great success raising money for the Children’s Society.

Finance

* Ann summarised the financial position for the year ended 31 December 2023. Once a further £200 that was paid through the Benefice was included, 96% of the Helmdon and Radstone elements of the Parish Share had been met. Regular giving and collection levels were down on 2022 amounts, but fundraising efforts had been excellent, exceeding 2002 by over £1,000. We wondered about asking a local woodworker to make a closed collection box to put out before each service, in the hope that this might boost collections.
* Thanking Ann for her hard work, Council unanimously agreed that the 2023 Accounts should now go to our Auditor.
* We discussed a draft 2024 Budget, which included Helmdon’s allocation of £24,343 towards 2024’s Parish Share, which had slightly increased. It was assumed that fundraising would secure about £4,000. Radstone insurance cover was only for third party insurance. Ann will check with Bill on his return that this is OK with Penny.

Fundraising events

* Cliff would discuss with Richard Farquarson how best to ensure our Reading Room booking were trailed on the Helmdon Village website “Upcoming Events”.
* Prices for the Pancake event on 10 February probably would have to be increased to cover expected costs: also we needed to check how much the event made in 2023 [a profit of £270 after £95 costs].
* We noted that there was quite a bit to do before finalising arrangements and publicity for the Open Gardens event on Sunday 9 June. 8 or 9 people were going to open their gardens. As well as building on Bill’s first draft of a brochure, some more detailed summaries of each garden would be helpful.

Quinquennial Review – actions and priorities

* We talked through the broad actions arising from the thorough and helpful Quinquennial Review Report. Some immediate work on slates had been carried out when a leak was found above the north choir stall. The roofers had been given an advance copy of the Report section dealing with the roof and drainage pipes, so that various other repairs had also been made. Cliff continued to monitor rainwater drains – there was an issue at the right-hand side of the north porch, but the others were working well.
* We talked about making the stone path up into church safer in all weather. We thought it worth exploring the cost of having a modest handrail as well for improved safety.
* Cliff would confer with Bill on his return, and then put some proposals for action and broad costs to Council Members.

Church tasks

* Rev Hugh had agreed that the Christmas decorations could be left in place until early February. We agreed to the suggestion that some stacking storage boxes be bought to keep them in, to make storage easier than on high shelves behind the organ. Wiggy very kindly offered to keep the boxes in her garage.
* We agreed that the old toys for very young children were no longer needed for Childrens’ Church, and that the mums and tots’ group probably was in abeyance: the toys could be recycled at Farthinghoe. Rebecca would double-check. We would also seize the chance of a general clear-out of old bits and pieces.

Pastoral Care

* Wiggy looked forward to a meeting the following Monday with Rev Hugh. The list of people in need of help was growing, and more helpers would be welcome.

Safeguarding

* No discussion as our Safeguarding Officer was away.

Worship

* There was plenty for the Benefice Worship Group to discuss with our new Rector in post, including his views on lay-led services.
* Rebecca would be talking to Rev Hugh about developing Childrens’ Church.
* We agreed that the Christmas services (and other events) had been very good and strongly supported. The Christingle had been very popular, as well as Words and Music, and villagers had clearly enjoyed Carol Singing outside the pub.

Any Other Business

* It was agreed that it would be useful to have a meeting of sidesmen to go through duties and to set up a system for ensuring coffee was set up by one of the sidesmen at the beginning of services. This would probably be best after a service. Cliff would announce this at the next service.
* Church heating remained a problem with colder weather now here, despite being turned on 2 hours before services began. We also thought it sensible to turn on the separate heater for the toilet hot tap but would need to remember to turn it off!
* We spoke about making better use of the Helmdon website to advertise upcoming events as well as services. All of Pews News is supposed to being put on the website. Fiona will check with those who would like more information about where they would look and talk to Ann Smith about something highly visible in the centre of the village. The Astwell website search engine probably could be improved: one for the Benefice as much as Helmdon alone.
* Vanessa pointed out that the East window exterior light was not working: Cliff will look into this to see if modern low-energy systems could improve the situation.
* We agreed with Vanessa’s suggestion that new oilcloths were now needed in the kitchen tables area.

Date of Next Meeting

Monday 11 January 2024. Venue to be confirmed.

We ended with The Grace