 **St Mary Magdalene Church Helmdon**

**Helmdon Church Council Meeting 27 June 2024 7:30pm**

Present

Rev Hugh White, Judith Elkington, Bill Elkington, Jenny Saunders, Wiggy Smith, Ann Netten, Rebecca Mount, Vanessa Vicars, , Niki Philips, Cliff Netten Chair.

1. Cliff opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Apologies Paul Stothard, Fiona Mason, Penny Bonner.

3. Minutes of last meeting. The minutes were agreed as a true record.

4. Matters Arising. We agreed that the Christine Klien Wassink legacy should be mainly put to the organ fund. We were also keen to put a handrail in place at the chancel step, where several members of the regular congregation now struggled when going up for communion.

5. Finance. Ann talked us through the accounts to 31 May. Her recent letter to Electoral Roll Members asking for increased regular giving had received a good response. As a result of Gift Aid and the Open Gardens event we have been able to increase Parish Share payments to 50% of our share to date. The change to encouraging people to give the collection on entering the church was working well, with no noticeable fall-off from previous years.

We agreed to print the church QR code onto a sticky label and put it in a prominent position. An advantage of Sum Up is an automatic Gift Aid addition to the money paid.

We noted that Syresham had been using a Tap to Pay (TTP) system which made it easier for people who use mobile phones for payments. A small group will trial moving to the Diocese Direct Debit system for regular payments, which returns Gift Aid automatically.

6. Quinquennial Review Bill and Cliff had very recently attended the Citation and Admission service at Stoke Bruene for Churchwardens. That church has recently put down a non-slip pathway to improve access from the large grass car park nearby. A similar surface has also been put in at a house in Helmdon: Bill has spoken at length to the contractor about the modern resin-based system used. For the pathway at Helmdon Church an approximate cost would be £8,000. Council agreed that the **churchwardens** should obtain some firm quotations.

We also agreed that repairs to the churchyard wall next to the shed should be put in hand, as well as re-roofing the shed itself. Jenny Overson has very kindly donated some surplus high-quality felt for that job. Other wall repairs to be tackled when funds permit.

7. Fundraising,

a. The recent Open Gardens Scheme was popular and successful in terms of money raised, which was almost as much as the previous years’ Church Fete (that event also included a large raffle). Plants sales had not done well, and it was suggested that if we ran Open Gardens again plants would be sold at church (close to where visitors would park cars).

b. Horse racing evening on 20 September. Bill ran through the main points to make for a successful evening. Good raffle prizes are needed by early August for tickets to be printed in good time.

c. Helmdon Christmas Fair. **Cliff** has booked the Reading Room for 7 December and will talk to John Coatsworth about him being Santa again. Plenty of gifts for Santa to give children were left over from last year.

8. Pastoral Care. Jenny Saunders and Sue Palmer have had to retire from helping at afternoon teas, but Wiggy hoped to be fit enough to host some events before long. These are very popular with established villagers.

We also discussed outreach to village newcomers. Hugh wondered about a Parish Welcome Pack, working with other bodies, based on upcoming village activities. **Cliff** will talk to Danny Moody and John Marchant about this.

9. Safeguarding. Judith explained her frustrations with the very poor way the Diocese sends out long papers to parishes. Our own CBS checks were up to date.

10. Worship. Niki reported on her drive to secure more volunteers for monthly Rota duties. We were delighted that Jenny Overson had joined as another Sides person, although more people would always be welcome on the team.

Hugh spoke about giving children a bigger role in services where they would like to do so. He wondered whether Communion services might be off-putting. A Benefice-wide All-ages service might be worth trying. The Diocese might also be able to help with other approaches to wider Mission. Hugh would also check with Brackley church who have been active in outreach.

12. AOB.

a. Niki raised a general point about entitlement to burial in the churchyard for people living in the village, and another one about an unusual grave orientation. On the first, the final decision in each case was for the Rector; on the second a faculty would be required.

b. Vanessa was concerned about the poor website links between the Parish Council and church pages. She would talk further to the Helmdon administrators.

c. We agreed to put in hand the vestry tidy-up once Vanessa was fully mobile again.

13. Date of next meeting Tuesday 20 August. 7:30 pm at 9 Wappenham Road.

14. The meeting closed with the Grace.