**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 20/1/25

**Present:** Alice Palmer, Clive Johnson, Philip Thompson, Ann Netten, Sue Timmis, & Hugh White

**Apologies** : Brenda Faragher, Clare Bonner

The meeting opened with a prayer.

**Minutes**

We agreed the minutes from 25/11/25

**Matters Arising**

* The extra BPCC meeting didn’t happen due to changed circumstances that made it unnecessary.
* The £154 donation was duly moved to help pay the Parish Share and allocated to Helmdon
* HW to do some teaching on giving this year

**Parish & Benefice Accounts**

Benefice

We examined the Benefice accounts and agreed that they could be passed to the independent examiner. Due to extra contributions from the parishes we had £421 to put towards next year’s Parish Share and £4204 to carry forward towards benefice expenses next year.

It was also noted that the benefice pays for church consumables such as wine, wafers and candles.

Helmdon

Helmdon were able to pay their full parish share thanks to a generous donation from their Friends group of £1500.

They have received a generous bequest, which has been allocated to their vestry and organ fund. There was some discussion as to where this should be shown in the accounts and it was agreed that it was a donation but could be recorded as part of the Organ and Vestry fund in the allocations.

**Action AN**

The transfer to PGS has been encouraging so far. AN has been talking to existing givers so far but will address the wider electoral roll later this year. AP suggested this might be done as part of the electoral roll renewal to take place this year. AP noted that tokens placed in the collection by congregation members who pay by PGS or standing order had inspired a member of the Syresham congregation to start a standing order.

Lois

Lois Weedon have ended the year in with a very healthy bank balance. CJ recorded thanks to all those who contributed to paying 100% Parish Share including money received from Tove Broadband. Six out of thirteen regular givers have moved to PGS, which is working well.

They received £7300 from their Friends towards chancel window repairs, £200 from selling old chairs through Marketplace, £300 from Easy Fundraising. Fundraising has increased thanks to a tea party, cheese and wine event, harvest supper and coffee mornings. They received various grants to help with the window repairs. Also VAT reclaim via the LPW scheme. CJ suggested we all write to our MPs asking that this scheme is not ended.

**Action all**

Next year will bring Quinquennial works including a structural problem on the roof and possible move on a servery in church.

Syresham

In Syresham, regular giving has increased thanks to two new generous contributors. Collections were also increased and the Christmas Fair and Summer Fete were successful largely through collaboration with other groups and holding the fair after school on a Friday to allow the School Choir to join us. They managed to pay 95% of their parish share.

They have used a loan to pay the first £32414 on their steeple works and have £36,864 in hand towards the final bill with £12000 extra grants and £5700 VAT return to come. They expect to end with a loan of around £20000.

They have given £822 in charitable donations to date with a further £360 to be paid to the Children’s society from the Christingle. A total of £1180 that is 5.9% of unrestricted income.

Wappenham

Wappenham are also in a good financial position at present. They have not been seeking increased giving this year as the WVC had increased the village precept in order to pay for maintenance of the closed churchyard. They paid 100% of their parish share with regular giving broadly similar but increased income from Tove broadband. It was agreed that both they and Lois would add an extra column to show income from Tove separate from regular giving. PT has some other tidying of accounts to complete.

**Action PT CJ**

Whitfield

Whitfield’s regular giving has increased dramatically this year and ST & CB have done excellent work on fundraising. The Friends of St John have paid for the building part of their insurance. They paid 89% or their Parish Share more than ever before. Charitable giving was £363, 6% of their unrestricted income. AP needs to complete the final reconciliation on these accounts.

**AOB** APreported thataverage Sunday attendance had risen from 55 to 58 across the benefice. HW asked if he should be asking people to donate to a fund to pay the Benefice Share. AP said the benefice part of the share was only a temporary fix and ideally the parishes would be able to pay the whole amount. A fund to cover the whole share would be great.

**NEXT MEETING** : Early March emails to pass reports and balance sheets to AP once auditing is complete.