 **St Mary Magdalene Church Helmdon**

**Helmdon Church Council Meeting 10 October 2024 7:30pm**

Present

Judith Elkington, Bill Elkington, Jenny Saunders, Wiggy Smith, Ann Netten, Fiona Mason, Rebecca Mount, Vanessa Vicars, Cliff Netten in the Chair.

1. Cliff opened the meeting with a brief prayer.

2. Apologies Penny Bonner, Niki Phillips and Paul Stothard.

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

4. Matters Arising.

(a) Under Matters Arising, Minute 4, Cliff had made a start on a draft booklet about our church for use as a Welcome document for newcomers. He would circulate a revised version to Council soon. We were agreed that this short booklet would be separate to a contribution to Helmdon Councils planned looseleaf folder for the Reading Room.

(b) Under the Christmas Fair, Minute 7(c), Cliff and Ann asked for contributions from Members for the Bottle Stall.

(c) Under the Remembrance Service, Minute 10(b), Cliff had discussed with Councillor Moody our outline plans for a War Memorial Act of Remembrance much closer to the War Memorial. Cllr Moody supported this change from previous years. Vanessa has secured a cornet player for this Act, and the Guides, Brownies and Rainbows would be at church before parading down to the War Memorial.

(d) Bill and Cliff had now been able to fix the new handrail at the Chancel step.

(e) The Vestry tidy-up had gone well in September, but Wiggy’s garage space was no longer available. Paul thought that he might have some room in his garage to use instead. To be followed up when Paul had returned from a spell away.

5. Finance.

(a) Ann talked us through the accounts to 30 September. We continued to make good progress towards our contribution to the Benefice Parish Share for the year. The next version of our Accounts for HCC would clarify funds set aside for Children’s Church.

(b) Ann thanked the volunteers who had tested out the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS). Rebecca volunteered to help with the email to go to all Electoral Roll members.

(c) Bill raised a point about the Sum-up machine which had been used in church a couple of times. If he were not present at a service, the machine needed a pass number to be entered. Fiona volunteered to put a sticker with this on under the hymn number boxes [since the meeting it has been noted this is on the inside cover of the purple folder on the hymn book cupboard at the entrance].

6. Fundraising,

(a) Horse racing evening on 20 September. Timing of this event seemed good, and we had more people come, but money raised was down on last year’s event. Possible reasons included no single control point on raffle ticket sales to help us keep track of how well they were going and number of bets on the evening less than last time. There was an issue with microphone use when the PC sound was “live” which meant we couldn’t encourage bets to be placed before each race began. Bill would put this to the Reading Room Committee.

We also agreed to push harder next time on having one or two bigger raffle prizes, to speed the Draw process and enable more people to get to the bar. We might change the timing of our main raffle, but it would be important not to clash with other major raffles. More prosecco and beer would be needed judging by the enthusiastic younger crowd who came along. Programme and sponsorship prices might be a bit higher next time.

(b) We spoke about some other fundraising events slated for 2025. A week-long Benefice Festival would run from 30 May to 8 June, with a possible celebrity cricket match at Syresham, a big musical event, and the possibility of each church holding floral decorations on the same day. Money raised would be for Christian Aid.

(c) Our own Open Gardens event, featuring up to 10 central village gardens, was set for Sunday 29 June 2025. We agreed that plant sales should be held in church, to be close to where many cars would be parked. Vanessa would ask Sarah Rudkin to put the date on the Benefice website to help avoid clashes with other churches’ events.

(d) Helmdon Christmas Fair. Both Wiggy and Niki were likely to be away for this one, so more help would be needed on the day. Sarah Stubbs was lined up for the Raffle that day. We faced some problems with both the Food Larder and Film Club Night taking place on the Friday night, so an early start would be required on Saturday morning. We agreed to provide limited refreshments of mince pies and teas, to make it easier for bakers to focus solely on the Cake Stall. Bill has a poster ready to put up outside the Reading Room after 11th November.

8. Pastoral Care. Wiggy reminded us of the growing number of local people in need. Fiona and Jenny could lend a hand. With several people having mobility issues, hosting teas in houses could be tricky, but a larger event at the Reading Room in spring might be a way forward.

9. Safeguarding. Judith said that Victoria Kellet (Diocesan Safeguarding Officer) would be at a Deanery Safeguarding event in Woodford Halse later this month. Bill, Judith, Wiggy and Cliff planned to attend.

10. Worship.

(a) The Harvest evening event of a simple short family service followed by refreshments was set for 12 October at 6:00 pm, followed by Holy Communion and Children’s Church the next day. Harvest gifts to be taken up to the altar on Sunday. The school Harvest Festival would be held on 24 October.

(b) A Pet Service would be held on 17 November.

(c) A Carol Service was lined up for Radstone on 22 December: Fiona and Penny would discuss heating options!

(d) Words and Music would be on Friday 20th December, 7:00 pm at Helmdon. Details of other Christmas period services to be confirmed.

11. AOB.

(a) Ann spoke about Advent Windows, for which many volunteers had been secured. The school could not be the 1st of December as this fell on Advent Sunday, so the aim was to have the Church as the first ‘window’. Fiona and Ann agreed to help Vanessa decorate the church porch for switch-on that day.

(b) We had a plea for greater clarity when church-related email traffic was building up. Headings to contributions would help.

(c) There had already been a request that the new handrail be made more visible. We would try a bit of white tape.

(d) Ann and Cliff would look at under-cupboard strip lighting options so that the sink and taps could be better seen.

(e) The children’s area could do with improvement so that as well as tables being easy to use, books could be kept close by.

(f) Vanessa had some good ideas about lighting the sedilia area, which we thought should be worked up.

Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 9th January 2025, 7:30 pm, at 9 Wappenham Road.

The meeting closed with the Grace.