



The Astwell Benefice

St Mary Magdalene Helmdon with Stuchbury & St Lawrence Radstone

St James the Great Syresham,

St John the Evangelist Whitfield,

St Mary and St Peter Lois Weedon & Weston with Plumpton

St Mary the Virgin Wappenham

www.astwellparishes.org.uk

Minutes of the Benefice PCC Meeting

Monday 1st July 2024

**Wording in red = Additions/corrections
from AP & HW**

HW opened the meeting with a prayer.

1. **Apologies:** there were none.
Present: HW, PS, JE, BE, MS, FH, CB, PB, SW, ST, CN, WS, AP & SR
2. **Approval of minutes of previous BPCC meeting held 22nd April 2024 (attached)** – These were unanimously approved, with the following matters/comments arising:
 - BE. has now heard that a Parish Council had increased its precept upon request from its PCC, so this should encourage other PCs to do the same. CB and PB both said that Whitfield and Radstone did not have PCs.
 - PS said he had not yet carried out a thorough review of the Benefice attendance figures, but would do so asap. **Action: PS**
 - HW said he had now clarified for himself the respective voting rights at the Vestry Meeting and the APCM. People on the local civic voting list can vote to elect Churchwardens, but you must be a member of the Church Electoral Register to vote at APCM.
3. **Committee Reports by Committee Chairs:**
 - a. **Finance** – (see AP's report attached).
 - b. **Worship (HW)** – HW said he thought the Rogationtide service particularly good, as was the LW Patronal Service, both of which were well attended. The Choir sang well at the latter, but there is a need for more choir members – “it lifts worship and unites us as a body”. **AP said the Benefice Pentecost service had also been excellent.** We are now planning worship further ahead to allow for enlisting retired priests where necessary and to give more time for preparation. FH raised the perennial problem of LW's services clashing with Plumpton's. **We agreed to continue to advertise Plumpton's services in Pews News, and also agreed that we should work with them to try to avoid clashes particularly for Christmas services.** FH said their services don't take much from the Lois congregation and it was noted that Plumpton have also made donations to LW church.
 - c. **Fund Raising** (see SW's report attached). **She said that the Raffle takings would probably be disappointing this year (£1k, rather than £2k target), as people were buying fewer tickets than previously. The total fundraising for the year is likely to be c. £5500.**
 - d. **Pastoral Care** (see WS's report attached). She said it was noticeable that HW was meeting and visiting people in the Benefice. BE said maybe the Pastoral Comm should produce a 'Welcome Pack', similar to that being created in Syresham. AP to liaise with WS on this. FH said that new people in LW were welcomed to the village in the village newsletter.
 - e. **Safeguarding** (see JE's report attached). JE presented diaries for reporting and recording Safeguarding issues in each church. Also, each church will be issued with a new copy of the Safeguarding Policy – 'Promoting a Safer Church', which BE said should be adopted by the BPCC. PS proposed this motion, and AP seconded it. The motion was adopted unanimously. PS said he was concerned about the diaries being left in churches for all to see – GDPR and privacy laws could be infringed, and the churches/BPCC could be seen to be breaking the law. **CN reinforced the point about the danger of recording Safeguarding issues in such a way as to risk**

them becoming public knowledge. To begin with it was agreed that JE was the responsible person, and that any Safeguarding concerns should be addressed to her, and she should then report them upwards to the Diocese. But then discussion was held on whether we were a single Parish or a group of Parishes in the eyes of the Diocese, and where the hierarchy of responsibility lay.

Action: PS will investigate and liaise with JE

f. Hope Centre (see AN's report attached)

Astwell Benefice Church Reports:

- a. **Helmdon & Radstone** (see CN's report attached) – CN said that things at Helmdon were generally moving ahead, thanks to the presence of HW.
- b. **Lois Weedon** (see FH's report attached)
- c. **Syresham** (see AP's report attached)
- d. **Wappenham** (see SW's report attached) – SW said that the V Hall roof required mending, and that the Church had recently agreed a new 35 yr lease with the V Hall.
- e. **Whitfield** (see CB's report attached) – CB asked if they needed a faculty for trees in the churchyard. BE said they should be able to obtain a 'de minimis' from the Archdeacon.

4. Discussion paper from AP/Syresham - 'Looking Forward' (see AP's paper attached)

5. Any Other Business:

- HW presented a paper entitled '**Looking to Astwell's Future**' (see attached), which focussed on how to encourage more people (particularly children/younger people) into the churches, with a greater variety of services. Music was also thought to be a good way to do this, but we need to modernise and refresh our music offering – a Worship Band (similar to Electric Church?) was discussed. "We need to try to do all this, even if we fail." A subcommittee reporting to the Worship Committee could be formed.

Action: HW/PS to follow up on this.

- PS said there were 'half-open doors' which could be opened further. HW would like to start some new -style services in Sept/Oct.

Action: HW/PS to follow up on this, and how it would affect other services already planned

- Discussion about an 'Astwell Festival' for 2025 – SW said possible events might include 2 nights of a play, a cricket match with teas, and a Flower Festival. She said they would be discussing this at the forthcoming S&F Meeting on 16th July (2.30pm at Manor Farm, Wapp).
- BE said he would speak to someone he knew in Brackley about re-vamping/updating the Benefice website.

Action BE

6. Date of next BPCC Meeting is Monday 7th October 2024, 7pm at Wappenham V Hall (PLEASE NOTE AMENDED TIME!)

7. The Grace was said and the meeting ended.