



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 7th October 2024

HW opened the meeting with a prayer.

1. **Apologies:** PS, PB & BG (Barbara Gundle - Wapp)
Present: HW, MS, FH, BE, JE, WS, WS, ST, AP, SW, CB, CN & SR
2. **Approval of minutes of previous BPCC meeting held 1st July 2024** – These were unanimously approved, with any matters/comments arising being dealt with during this meeting.
3. **Reports by Committee Chairs:**
 - a. **Finance:** (see AP's report). AP believes that the Benefice will achieve 95% of Parish Share this year (roughly £3,500 short of full payment). HW said he thinks it is wrong not to pay 100% of the share, that doing so may have consequences in future, and that everyone must give more to make up the shortfall. BE said he had basically been assured, when the Benefice was recruiting a new Rector, that enough was being paid to guarantee a full-time incumbent. There followed a discussion about where the shortfall might come from and BE asked to defer any further discussion and decision on finance to the Finance Comm Meeting to be held in November.
Action: AP, HW & Finance Comm.
 - b. **Worship:** (HW) – HW reported that following agreement at the recent Worship Comm Mtg, a number of slots for new 'Special' services (initially 1 per month) had been put in place in the service schedule for early 2025. This is aimed at refreshing our worship and trying to bring in those who might be put off by the existing types of service offered. FH suggested trying to encourage the clubs/societies in LW to run their own services (eg. WI, Horticultural Soc, School etc) and agreed to pursue this. BE and AP said this had been trialled at Helmdon and Syresham, but it was the same small group of people in each village who ran the services, and that they had eventually 'run out of steam'. CB mentioned the success of their 'Songs of Praise'-style services, and FH mentioned the success of a recent visit from U3A to LW church. HW said he was investigating the possibility of a visit from a Gospel Choir early next year.
 - c. **Fund Raising:** (see SW's report). A forthcoming meeting of the Committee would be working on plans for the Astwell Festival (31st May - 8th June 2025, with funds raised going to Christian Aid and local children's charities). FH said it might be possible to claim Gift Aid for the Benefice on the funds raised. WS objected strongly to this and it was agreed that the GA must go to the charities.
 - d. **Pastoral Care:** (See WS's report). WS said she was worried about the number of ill and elderly people now requiring visits etc and the shortage of PC members, particularly from Wappenham, and asked for more volunteers. SW said that there is a strong 'non-church' system of care for the ill, bereaved etc in Wappenham already, which works well. AP commented that in Syresham and probably in other villages, there are more Pastoral Care visitors than sit on the Pastoral Care committee. Also that in Syresham we deliver gifts at Mothering Sunday, Harvest, Christmas etc to those on our list as well as inviting the bereaved to Time to Remember. The group asked that volunteers be appealed for in the PN.
Action: SR
 - e. **Safeguarding:** JE said she had attended a Diocese Safeguarding meeting which had been quite useful but did not cover issues in a United Benefice like ours. She re-presented the diaries in which to anonymously report and record any Safeguarding issues. These should be kept in a safe place in each church. Any issues should also be reported verbally to JE, who will then escalate them either to HW or to Peterborough. There is a Deanery Synod meeting on

this subject at 6.30pm on Wed 23rd Oct; HW to raise the issue of who records in the books and who has access to them at this meeting.

Action: HW

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

4. Astwell Benefice Church Reports:

- a. **Helmdon & Radstone** (see CN's report) – BE reported that following Radstone's Quinquennial report, the electrical system had been condemned, and that work was required. HW said that someone had recently suggested that Radstone should not be used in winter, as there is no heating in the church and the access is difficult for the elderly and disabled. HW suggested that BE should discuss with PB how and whether Radstone should be used at their next Council meeting. PB has requested a 3pm Carol Service at Radstone on 20th Dec (HW will officiate and warm clothing is required!) WS volunteered to knock on some doors in Radstone to raise awareness of services in the church.

Action: BE, PB & WS

- b. **Lois Weedon** (see FH's report)

- c. **Syresham** (see AP's report). Messy Church could be opened up to other parishes if they want to go.

Action: AP/All

- d. **Wappenham** (see BG's report)

- e. **Whitfield** (see CB's report). CB said their Friends' Safari Supper had been reorganised for 9th November, more details to follow. The discussion then moved to environmental concerns and HW mentioned the A ROCHA awards (A ROCHA is an international network of environmental organisations with a Christian ethos).

4. Any Other Business:

- HW said that the Worship Committee had now been disbanded, and that all decisions on services would be handed back to the parishes. HW, PS & SR are meeting to discuss the practicalities of organising and staffing services via email. **Action: HW, PS & SR**
- FH raised the comments made in LW following HW's newsletter article about his problems with upkeep of the Rectory – HW said it was a joke and there was no need for parishioners to take it seriously!
- BE reported that he had spoken to someone who knew about website design, and that a new/improved Benefice site could be easily and cheaply achieved. A discussion followed about the need for a better website, and SW and FH said that as this would be needed for publicising the Astwell Festival, maybe it could be incorporated into the work of the Soc & F'raising Committee. FH asked SR for access to her website logins, so that he could look at how it was constructed. **Action: FH, SW & SR**

5. *Date of next BPCC Meeting is Monday 20th January 2025, 7pm at Wappenham V Hall.*

6. The Grace was said and the meeting ended.