



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 Benefice PCC Meeting Monday 24th March 2025 at the Rectory

HW opened the meeting with a prayer.

Present: SW, ST, CB, CN, AP, MS, PB, PS, FH, HW, WS, BE, SR

Apologies: JE

1. **Review and Approval of the 2024 Astwell Benefice Finance Report**

After briefly discussing some minor changes to the original report (AP), all voted in favour of accepting the 2024 Finance Report. PS thanked the parish treasurers and AP for their work in putting the report together.

FH asked what happens to those parishes/benefices who could not/did not pay their parish shares in full. AP & BE both said that it would mean that they would not be allocated a full-time priest, particularly once in Interregnum.

2. **Proposed changes to Service Pattern**

PS outlined the proposed changes to the service pattern, noting the minimum requirement of holding one Holy Communion (HC) on Sunday somewhere in the Benefice. He also said that holding more services would not necessarily result in higher attendances. The proposal is to provide 'space' for thought and actions which might increase attendance over time.

After some debate about the merits of making any changes at this time, (including a frank exchange of views between MS and HW) the new pattern (see attached) was adopted with the following amendments:

- Benefice Services would start at 10.30am. The allocation of services to each church would acknowledge practicalities such as heating (or not) so, for example, Radstone would not host a service in the colder months.
- The Praise and Prayer service in Syresham on the 2nd Sunday would remain. Any new style service would replace the Morning Prayer service on the 4th Sunday.
- The Breakfast Church in Wappenham on the 4th Sunday would be advertised as "from 9.00am".

HW talked about the Benefice HCs, with hopefully more people attending (and 'travelling') than at individual parish services. Charity speakers will be invited on a regular basis, and hopefully these services will help us to 'look outward' more. Those churches with facilities such as loos and kitchens might be favoured for the Benefice services, although SW and CB both said that loo facilities could be made available in nearby village halls.

New types of worship were briefly discussed, and CN noted the success of their 'alternative' Harvest service, and how much he had enjoyed the Ionian Liturgy at Radstone recently, which others echoed.

It was agreed that beginning the new pattern in May might be too soon, and that the 'Let's Shine Festival' would interrupt the pattern in June, so that it might be best to start in July – ***HW & PS to confirm this.***

3. **Any Other Business**

HW raised the issue of printing the Pews News for use in churches on Sunday. LW already does this, but others were reluctant to do so, although some use it for the readings from their devices. HW said he would like a small number to be printed and available in each church on a weekly basis.

The Grace was said and the meeting ended.