

FUTURE SERVICES

www.astwellparishes.org.uk

MARCH 2026

Sunday 8th March – Third Sunday of Lent

9am	Wappenham	Breakfast Church
9.30am	Lois Weedon	Morning Prayer
10.30am	Helmdon	Holy Communion
11.15am	Syresham	Morning Prayer

Sunday 15th March – Mothering Sunday

9.30am	Lois Weedon	Holy Communion
10.30am	Syresham	Family Service with the Chapel (at Church)
10.30am	Helmdon	Family Praise & Prayer
11.15am	Wappenham	Family Praise & Prayer

Sunday 22nd March – Fifth Sunday of Lent

9.30am	Lois Weedon	Matins
9.30am	Whitfield	Holy Communion
10.30am	Helmdon	Morning Prayer
11.15am	Syresham	Praise & Prayer
11.15am	Wappenham	Holy Communion

Sunday 29th March – Palm Sunday

10.30am	Syresham	Palm Sunday
Benefice		Holy Communion

HOLY WEEK

Monday 30th March

7pm	Whitfield	Compline
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Tuesday 31st March

5.30pm	Syresham	Compline
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Wednesday 1st April

7pm	Lois Weedon	Compline
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Maundy Thursday 2nd April

6.30pm	Helmdon	Passover Meal & Holy Communion
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Good Friday 3rd April

9.30am	Lois Weedon	Meditation
10.30am	Syresham	Procession Church to Chapel (inc service)
11.15am	Wappenham	Meditation
2.30pm	Helmdon	Procession & Holy Communion

Easter Saturday 4th April

9.00pm	Plumpton	Easter Vigil & First Communion of Easter
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PEWS NEWS

The Astwell Benefice

St Mary Magdalene Helmdon with Stuchbury & St Lawrence Radstone, St James the Great Syresham with St John the Evangelist Whitfield, St Mary & St Peter Lois Weedon with Weston & Plumpton, and St Mary the Virgin Wappenham.

www.astwellparishes.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/astwellbenefice>

Sunday 1st March 2026

Second Sunday of Lent

Services in the Benefice:

Benefice Holy Communion

*with speaker Jill Lammond
from DAWN*

(Dignity for All Women Now)

10.30am

at

Helmdon

LENT SESSIONS

At this year's Lent sessions, we will be reading and discussing David Ford's

'Meeting God in John'

The sessions will run as follows:

at Helmdon Reading Room on Mondays from 23rd February till 30th March, at 11am

and

at Syresham Chapel Schoolroom on Tuesdays from 24th February until 24th March, at 7.40pm
(note change of days and time!)

Please let Hugh know if you would like to come so that the appropriate number of books can be ordered.

Collects & Readings for Second Sunday of Lent

Collect:

Almighty God,
you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,
that they may return to the way of righteousness:
grant to all those who are admitted
into the fellowship of Christ's religion,
that they may reject those things
that are contrary to their profession,
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 12:1-4

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' ⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

New Testament Reading: Romans 4:1-5,13-17

¹ What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' ⁴ Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵ But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. ¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. ¹⁶ For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations')—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Gospel Reading: John 3:1-17

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' ³ Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' ⁵ Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹ 'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Post Communion Collect:

Almighty God,
you see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves:
keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls;
that we may be defended from all adversities
which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt
the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Prayers for Second Sunday of Lent

Holy God, as we continue our Lenten journey make us mindful of our potential for good and for growth, as we strive for perfection in your sight despite our human failing and imperfections.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Creator God, we pray for all in authority that they may never be tempted to abuse or misuse their power. Help and guide them to show wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace and so bring peace and prosperity to every corner of the world. We particularly pray for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine as it enters its fourth year – Lord please bring peace.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Father God, we pray for our relationships with family, friends and neighbours and we particularly pray that we never lead them into any kind of temptation. Help them to see us as a new creation, still the person that God created, but now also as an active part of God's earthly family.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God, our hearts ache when we hear about the pain and suffering that some of our loved ones have to endure especially when illness has come about through the temptations of the world. Come close and bring comfort and healing to all those who we now name before you.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God, you know when our hearts are broken by bereavement. You know the pain of loss because you suffered through the death of your only son. In the midst of ongoing sorrow, help us to rejoice in the comfort of the hope, encouragement, and comfort that your promise of eternal life brings to all who believe in Jesus.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Everlasting God, may we show and share our love and trust for you wholeheartedly, today, as we go back out into the world and through every day of our Lenten journey.

Merciful father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

TO HOLD IN YOUR PRAYERS THIS WEEK:

We bring before our loving heavenly Father those in our villages and others we know who are unwell, recovering from injury or illness and all those who need our prayers for any reason.

From Helmdon: Barbara Buxton, Diane Thorpe, and Joan Hadfield.

From Lois Weedon & Weston: Joan Jacobs, Lis Cockrell, Caroline Hunt, Margaret Seckington and Anna Mackaness.

From Syresham: George Summers and Suzanne Prestcott.

From Wappenham: Judy King, Dorothy & David Nicholson, and Edwin & Phyllis King.

For those known to us:

Margaret Reardon, Pauline Collis, Evelyn Johnson, Ollie Dotterill, Francis Potsoni, Mary Coates, Emily Barthelamy, May Oliver, Lily & Theo Wright, Christobel Grant and Diane Snow.

Please pray for those bereaved, and the family & friends of:

Alan Jones, Linda and Will Adams, Ailsa Williams, Jonathan Sayers, Joan McCann, Maralynn Hunter, Ann Smith, John Thorne and Eileen Watson.

Also, please pray for the work of the Beacon Centre, the Wolverton Mission, the Hope Centre, Katharine House Hospice, Northampton Women's Aid and The Women's Refuge. We also continue to pray for refugees fleeing persecution and all victims of hatred, terrorism and war.

Dates for your Diary

MARCH

Fri 6th 'An Evening for Ukraine', Tingewick Village Hall, 7 for 7.30pm' Tickets £10. Contact Malcolm Orr Ewing on 07734 166648 for tickets

BENEFICE CONTACTS

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Please contact the Rector or your Churchwarden/Representative if you have queries about baptisms, weddings, or funerals.

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Regular events held in the Benefice:

- **Helmdon Coffee Morning** is held each Tuesday, 10 am-12 noon in the Reading Room
- **Whitfield Coffee Morning** is held on the first Tuesday of the month, 10am-12 noon in the Village Hall.
- **St Mary's, Wappenham Coffee Morning**, is held on the first Wednesday of the month, 10 am-12 noon, in the Village Hall.
- **St Mary & St Peter, Lois Weedon Coffee Morning** is held from 10am until 12 noon on the first Friday of each month, in Lois Weedon Village Hall.

Benefice Bulletin – 1st March 2026

Nicodemus, the focus of this Sunday's Gospel, is an intriguing figure. He appears in the Bible only in John's Gospel. He is a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews, so a man of status, learning and also presumably of some intelligence. He is impressed by Jesus – though his coming by night suggests he doesn't want that to be widely known - but he finds it hard to get his head round what Jesus says about being born 'from above' or 'again' (the single Greek word used can mean either, possibly confusingly) and his last words in the conversation are 'how can these things be?' rather than 'Ah, now I see what you mean.' He still seems to be in the dark, metaphorically as well as literally. He has not grasped either what Jesus means in their conversation or Jesus' true nature and there is no indication that his commitment to Jesus has developed beyond his understanding that Jesus has come from God.

However, in Chapter seven Nicodemus responds to the hostility towards Jesus shown by his fellow Pharisees and their desire to arrest him like this: *Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 'Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?' The Pharisees reply sharply, 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.'* Here, if he hasn't exactly come out for Jesus, Nicodemus has taken something of a stand on his behalf and got a flea in his ear for his troubles.

Still, this passage doesn't necessarily imply any kind of committed discipleship, though we might wonder. Nicodemus' last appearance, however, shows a degree of commitment to Jesus greater than we might expect on the evidence of Nicodemus' two previous appearances. In Chapter 19, after the crucifixion, we read how Nicodemus joins Joseph of Arimathea in burying Jesus, *'Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths'* and they lay Jesus in the tomb.

That 'who had at first come to Jesus by night' may indicate that Nicodemus is prepared now to risk being seen in the light as a follower of Jesus. And certainly, that hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes is a hugely extravagant gift.

One writer speaks of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (the latter a *secret* disciple of Jesus because he feared the Jews) as 'two outstanding men [who] having failed to stand up for Christ during his life, came to shed their tears too late after his death.' I think I'd want less to criticise than to emphasise Nicodemus' spiritual progress.

Many people are impressed by Jesus without being able to accept fully the account he gives of himself. That Nicodemus makes the progress he does suggests that a rather dispassionate and perhaps qualified admiration of Jesus can turn, by God's grace, into firm commitment to him, into love of him. Perhaps that might encourage some of us.

Hugh