 **St Mary Magdalene Church Helmdon**

**Helmdon Church Council Meeting 3 March 2025 at 7:30pm**

Present

Judith Elkington, Bill Elkington, Jenny Saunders, , Ann Netten, Fiona Mason, Rebecca Mount, Niki Phillips, Wiggy Smith, Paul Stothard, Rev Hugh White, Vanessa Vicars, Cliff Netten in the Chair. Nick Westbury in attendance

1. Before the Meeting began, we had a very informative presentation from Nick Westbury about the work and activities of the Bloxham local Boys Brigade Group.

2. Apologies Penny Bonner.

3. Minutes of last meeting (9 January 2025). The minutes were agreed as a true record.

4. Matters Arising.

(a) Under Minute 10 (Pews News), Niki offered to print off hard copies of Pews News for congregation members without access to the online version, with Bill as back up when Niki was away.

(b) Under AOB (a) Cliff reported that Chris Mount had recently put some ventilation grilles into the kitchen doors and ceiling area. These seemed to be working well. The crockery and children’s cupboard next to the jigsaws table had been badly affected by mould, which Cliff had tackled: there was very limited air circulation in the cupboard so he would check the cupboard regularly.

(c) The churchwardens had written to our architects about removal of the present organ and re-ordering of the vestry area. The Diocesan Advisory Committee would be at church with our architect on 10 March for a site visit.

5. Finance.

(a) Ann talked us through the most recent accounts.

(b) We discussed the collapsed churchyard wall on the bend at the top of Church Street. Council agreed that Tom Hirst should be asked to take on the repair job in the light of his recent site visit with Paul and Cliff. As well as informing the village about this, we will be asking for some donations towards the cost. [Tom has now accepted the job, with a likely start in late April/early May. Cliff has been looking into a possible Crowdfunding appeal].

6. Charitable Giving. We discussed our approach to charitable giving, noting that C of E guidance was that 5% of revenue or 1 month’s equivalent should be set aside from unrestricted funds for charity. As well as deciding what we could afford, we should better advertise what good causes we supported. We agreed to put this item on our next Agenda to establish a clear policy.

Fundraising,

(a) Our Bingo Night would be on 1 April, starting at 7:00 pm. Bill and Cliff to sort out drinks, prizes and prices for scorecards. Nibbles would be provided for each table, with a paid bar available.

(b) We spoke about the Open Gardens event, originally set for Sunday 29th June 2025 and agreed it should be brought forward to 15th June.

(c) Other Events. On 11 April, the Benefice was holding a Quiz Night at 7:00 pm. Teams of six would not be representing individual churches, and profits would be given to charity.

7. Pastoral Care.

Wiggy’s explained that Sue Palmer was hosting teas once more, as well as those Wiggy was doing. 42 people, including from Lois Weedon and Wappenham, were taking part.

8. Safeguarding.

Judith said that the Safeguarding diaries had been circulated across the Benefice. It was important that any Safeguarding concerns were noted, in readiness for any formal paper trail, but it was essential to preserve confidentiality. We thought it might be best if any concerns went straight to the Safeguarding Officer for them to record and monitor the situation.

9. Worship.

(a) We had an outline summary from Paul of possible changes to the Benefice service patterns, with more general 9:30 starts. This would make it far better for Rev Hugh in particular, as well as others taking more than one service on a Sunday and needing to travel the local road system. This is a work in progress.

(b) We agreed that Helmdon Stations of the Cross should be set up in the week *after* Easter Monday. A Benefice Palm Sunday service would be held at Wappenham, followed by a Benefice Easter Eve service at Whitfield.

10. Any Other Business

(a) Paul reminded us about the Let’s Shine Benefice Festival running between 30 May and 8 June. This would include a Picnic in Helmdon and a Hats Stand operatic performance in the church.

(b) Vanessa spoke about the Musical Evening (to be held in church at the time of Open Gardens), following the tradition set by Ann Smith in past years.

(c) We discussed Mothering Sunday arrangements for 30 March.

(d) Bill told us about a Faculty request from Carol Brookhouse’s daughter concerning a Burgess family grave. This arose because the plot would not be for a village resident. We agreed to the request unanimously. However, we did not have a formal policy for public notification in such cases and Paul agreed to investigate this.

(e) Bill reminded us that Council was nearing the end of its 3-year term and elections would be held at the Vestry Meeting on 11 May. Churchwardens would also be elected on the same cycle. Although Bill would be standing down, Cliff offered to put himself forward once again. Niki would organise a new Electoral Roll and circulate all current members.

Date of Next Meeting

12 May 7:30 pm, at church.

The meeting closed with the Grace.