



## **St Mary Magdalene Church Helmdon**

### **Helmdon Church Council Meeting 15 September 2025 at 7:30pm**

#### Present

Judith Elkington, Bill Elkington, Jenny Saunders, Ann Netten, Niki Phillips, Vanessa Vicars, Revd Hugh White, Cliff Netten in the Chair.

Apologies Penny Bonner, Fiona Mason, Rebecca Mount, Wiggy Smith, Paul Stothard.

The Meeting began with a prayer. We thought of Louise Stothard, whose recent operation was the reason why Paul could not join us.

#### 1. Minutes of the 5 August Council Meeting

The Minutes were agreed as a true record. Matters arising were covered in the main Agenda items.

#### 2. Finance – current position

Ann updated us on the accounts to end August 2025.

Churchyard income had helped towards meeting the costs of churchyard wall repairs and we were also grateful to the Friends of Helmdon Church for their contribution. £450 of the cost has not been covered to date.

We had paid the architect's fees in respect of the feasibility study for the organ replacement and vestry re-organisation project, but there would be more to come. Cliff would attend the Francis Coales Foundation 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in October. The Foundation had supported previous church improvement projects, and we planned to ask them for help towards the project, as well as other applying to other sources of grants.

It looks unlikely that we will be able to meet our contribution to the Benefice Parish Share which is £24,861. Taking into account payments to date and planned payments we will have paid £19,000 by the end of the year. Further fundraising is unlikely to raise the remainder in full.

Council members expressed their thanks to our Treasurer for all her hard work.

#### 4. Policy on Charitable Giving

We noted the great success of the Let's Shine Festival in establishing funds for a wide range of good causes, concluding that the Benefice had made an effective contribution to charitable giving in 2025. Another Festival was planned for next year.

#### 5. French Evening on 27 September

The event had been moved from church to the Reading Room, with the hire costs met by a generous donation. Ticket sales were slow to date, but moving the event to a more central location might give a late boost.

We agreed that each chef involved in the mid-film meal would be given the same recipes by Vanessa. Each chef to cater for 3 portions. Wiggy had promised a gluten-free cassoulet and apple flan. French bread to be bought on the day.

Cliff undertook to buy 12 bottles of red wine and 12 of white. He had plenty of beer and cider from previous fundraising events as well as some soft drinks.

We agreed to have a simple raffle on the night with a limited number of prizes to speed things up!

#### 6. Other Fundraising

- a) The Harvest Festival would be held on Saturday 18 October at 6:00 pm, with children as the focal point and no service at Helmdon the following day.
- b) An important fundraiser is our main raffle, to be drawn on the Race Night. Ideas for prizes included a hamper, time from Helen and Mikey's gardening team, a half-load of logs from the village company, and a cash prize. Niki would approach Tesco, which donated last year. All further ideas, welcome, especially given the number of Council Members absent from the meeting.
- c) The Race Night was booked for 22 November. Race cards for the event were in hand by Bill, who needed to be told to whom they were then sold.
- d) The Christmas Fair needed some raffle prizes, and some volunteers to help run the cake stall. We wondered about the church choir singing some carols during the event.

## 7. Publicity about the church and its activities

We agreed that fliers in the Reading Room, and on the village noticeboards, about events would be important additions to posts on Helmdon social media. We aimed to produce a Quarterly “forward look” – Bill and/or Vanessa to work on this.

## 8. Faculty Application

Cliff explained progress on a complicated church legal process. Paul and he expected to submit a draft soon for advice from the Diocesan Advisory Committee before formal submission.

## 9. Streaming services

We discussed the church audio-visual system and how it might be used both as a chargeable service to couples holding a wedding and possibly to transmit normal Sunday services to people who could not physically attend them. Children’s church might be able to trial this. Rebecca to be asked by Cliff and Bill.

## 10. Regular service times at Helmdon

Members of the congregation were unhappy about the system currently under trial. 9:30 was too early for those with carer responsibilities, and 11:15 services ended late. The 10:30 Benefice service start time was popular. The two lay-lead services each month could also begin at either 10:00 or 10:30, but Paul’s input on this was important.

We also spoke about the regular Tuesday morning meetings held by Rev Hugh and Paul to discuss Mission within the Benefice and how best to involve churchwardens in the process. This would be distinct from the BRICC meetings.

## 11. Single Parish Structure

This was a work in progress, with Paul in the lead.

## 12. Safeguarding, and Pastoral Care

We needed short reports to put to Council when the leads were unable to attend meetings. Action Fiona and Wiggy.

## 13. Any Other Business

- a) Church Path. The path was recognised to be unsafe in the last Quinquennial Review. Given the varying interpretations about

what was possible, Cliff would ask Archdeacon Richard for guidance under *de minimus* rules to avoid the need for a full Faculty application.

- b) Church Nativity figures. The old plaster set was in poor condition. In view of differing opinions about disposing of it, Rev Hugh would look at it and decide.
- c) Ride and Stride. This event had not involved Helmdon this year, following very low numbers coming to us in previous ones. We noted that the Northampton Churches Trust was a potential source of funds towards the re-ordering project.

#### 14. Date of Next Meeting

We agreed to meet at the Reading Room Committee Room during the winter months. Cliff would book it for early in November and as Chair cover the modest hire cost. Action: Cliff