

FUTURE SERVICES

www.astwellparishes.org.uk

DECEMBER

Friday 12th December

6pm Helmdon Carols by Candlelight
with Choir

Thursday 18th December

5.30pm Lois Weedon Carol Service with Choir

Friday 19th December

7.00pm Helmdon Words & Music

Sunday 21st December – Fourth Sunday of Advent

9.30am Lois Weedon Holy Communion
10.30am Helmdon Praise & Prayer
11.15am Wappenham Praise & Prayer
3.00pm Radstone Carol Service
6pm Syresham Joint Carol Service
with Chapel & Choir,
at Church

Wednesday 24th December – Christmas Eve

3pm Helmdon Christingle
3pm Syresham Christingle (Quiet)
4.30pm Syresham Christingle (Traditional)
4.30pm Whitfield Christingle
6pm Wappenham Carol Service
6pm Plumpton Carol Service
11.30pm Helmdon First Communion of
Christmas

Thursday 25th December – Christmas Day

9am Whitfield Holy Communion
9.30am Lois Weedon Family Service
10.15am Helmdon Holy Communion
11am Syresham Family Service
11.30am Wappenham Holy Communion

Sunday 28th December – First Sunday of Christmas

10.30am Wappenham Benefice Holy
Communion

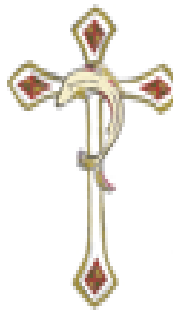
*Please note that there will be no Midweek Holy
Communion service at Helmdon on
Wednesday 31st December*

**The Kingdom Season and Advent
film series continues with:**

**Episodes from the TV series 'Rev' with
Tom Hollander and Olivia Coleman.**

*'More laughs than usual this series,
but a serious core'.*

**Monday 15th December
at 10.30am in Helmdon Reading Room**



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 14th December 2025

Third Sunday of Advent

Services in the Benefice:

9.00am Wappenham Breakfast Church
9.30am Lois Weedon Morning Prayer
10.30am Helmdon Holy Communion
11.15am Syresham Morning Prayer
5.00pm Whitfield Carol Service with
Choir



Collect & Readings for Third Sunday of Advent

Collect:

O Lord Jesus Christ,
who at your first coming sent your messenger
to prepare your way before you:
grant that the ministers and stewards of your
mysteries
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way
by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the
wisdom of the just,
that at your second coming to judge the world
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight;
for you are alive and reign with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 35. 1-10

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.
³ Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
'Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.'
⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
⁸ A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,^[a]
but it shall be for God's people;^[a]
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.
⁹ No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
¹⁰ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

New Testament Reading: James 5:7-10

⁷ Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 11:2-11

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' ⁴ Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'
⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written,
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you."
¹¹ Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Post Communion Collect:

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
that when your Christ comes again
we may shine as lights before his face;
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.



Prayers for Third Sunday of Advent

Everlasting God, as we continue to prepare for Christmas, help us to find time in our busy lives to be quiet where we can, and through prayer and reflection, appreciate the wonder of your love. As we revisit the story of Jesus' birth through our Advent worship, deepen our joy, invigorate our prayers and our praise and help it to challenge the way that we live our lives.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Faithful God, may we like Mary worship in such a way that our joy in you grows through the recognition of the countless ways we have benefitted from your blessings throughout our lives and the goodness and mercy that you show to us despite our shortcomings. Help us to pass on our faith to the next generation of our families that they too might praise with the same joy that Mary did.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Merciful God, we pray for the nations of the world especially where pride interferes with power to produce tyranny, where the divide between rich and poor is beyond imagination and where people have been hungry for so long that many have never experienced a satisfying and sustaining meal.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Father God, we pray for those whose children cannot take part in Christmas celebrations because of the expense; those who put themselves seriously into debt attempting to meet expectations; those who may have to use food banks for a Christmas meal. Help us to do all that we can through our prayers and through our giving to the local and international charities that are helping the less fortunate.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Merciful God, we raise before you the sick and the suffering, that you would show the strength of your arm and scatter everything which prevents them from enjoying health and wholeness in body, mind and spirit.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Mighty God, we rejoice for those who now experience the joy of heaven according to the promises you made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to us his descendants, forever.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Gracious God, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour and give us the strength to grow in love, that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth.

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.

Please pray for the family and friends of Reverend Will Adams, whose memorial service will be held at Syresham on Saturday 10th January at 2pm.

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

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, Christopher Carr, 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:

Revd Will Adams, Ailsa Williams, Jonathan Sayers, Joan McCann, Maralynn Hunter, Ann Smith, John Thorne, Eileen Watson, Geoff Abbey, Jean Spendlove, Vic Butler, Philip Gulliver, Jean Parks, Jean Mackaness, Diane Watts, Peter Stubbs, Nicholas Reynell, Linda Smalley, Tony Wilmot, John Maleham, Betty Stubbs, Wendy Procter, Derek Morris, David Brookhouse, Jonathan Miller, David Powell, Joyce Beech.

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 all refugees fleeing persecution, all victims of war and terror, and all those affected by the Covid-19 virus.

Regular events held in the Benefice:

- **Helmdon Coffee Morning** is held each Tuesday, 10 am-12 noon in the Reading Room
- **Syresham Coffee Morning** is held each Thursday, 10 am-12 noon in the Village Hall.
- **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 CONTACTS

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*Please contact the Rector or your
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baptisms, weddings, or funerals.*

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Benefice Bulletin for 14th December 2025

Lucia Day, 13th December, is a great festival day in Sweden with traditional ceremonies occurring in homes and workplaces all over the country - saffron buns (rather than mince pies) are a must. What follows is mostly drawn from the Church of Sweden's website.

The celebration of Lucia - the name come from the Latin word for light - has its background in folk beliefs, legends and historical facts. Today its potent symbolism (candles brought into the darkness) reminds us that hope endures even in the darkest of times because God is always with us.

Lucia is a historical figure who was born in Syracuse, Sicily in the 280s. It is also historically proven that she was martyred for her faith. In the Catholic tradition, she is the patron saint of the blind. In Roman society, being a Christian was a crime in Lucia's time. Lucia was probably killed in 304 during the Emperor Diocletian's persecution of Christians. She would have been, therefore, no older than 25.

Benefice Bulletin (cont.)

The legends about Lucia are many and the details are probably of variable veracity. She was born into a wealthy family and it is said that as a child she decided never to marry and to give everything she owned to the poor.

When Lucia was betrothed to a man who did not share her Christian faith, she was distraught. Legend has it that she gave her dowry to the poor and that her fiancé became so furious that he revealed that she was a Christian and she was put to the sword.

In Sweden, 13th December was a special day long before the custom of Lucia processions came into being. Lucia night was the longest night of the year according to the Julian calendar. Folk belief had it that that night was dangerous – supernatural powers were on the move. People stayed awake, eating to avoid falling asleep.

In Germany there was a tradition of a girl being dressed up as a 'Christkindlein', a baby Jesus with lighted candles in her hair representing a halo. In western Sweden the tradition was taken up among the nobility, but here it was an adult woman who brought food to the farm people while they were keeping vigil. She was dressed in white and had candles in her hair.

The Lucia procession's Starboys have their own history. In some places, young boys went from house to house at Christmas time, sang a few songs and finally asked for money. The boys were dressed in white shirts with ostrich hats on their heads, representing the three wise men, King Herod and Judas.

The modern Lucia celebration took off when the newspaper Stockholms Dagblad arranged the first public Lucia procession in 1927. At first, Lucia appeared alone or with one or two companions. Gradually, she gained a retinue of bridesmaids and Starboys. In pre-schools today, Santa Claus and gingerbread men also have their place.

Lucia Day is a Saint's Day and many churches hold Lucia services. In London, Lucia services are put on for the benefit of ex-pat Swedes at the Swedish Church in Marylebone and for wider audiences in St Paul's Cathedral – and this year in Westminster Cathedral also.

In some respects the Lucia procession is like a Christingle service and the two work well in a single ceremony. Maybe we could try that next year in Astwell.

Hugh

