

FUTURE SERVICES

www.astwellparishes.org.uk

FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday 1st February - Candlemas

10.30am	Lois Weedon	Benefice Holy Communion for Candlemas, with speaker from William Blake House
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Wednesday 4th February

10am	Helmdon	Midweek Holy Communion
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Sunday 8th February – Second Sunday before Lent

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

Sunday 15th February – Sunday next before Lent

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

Wednesday 18th February – Ash Wednesday

10am	Helmdon	Ash Wednesday Service
7pm	Syresham	Ash Wednesday Service

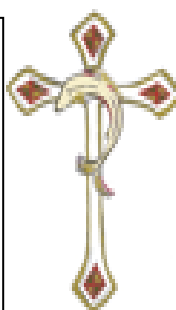
Sunday 22nd February – First Sunday of Lent

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

MARCH 2026

Sunday 1st March – Second Sunday of Lent

10.30am	Helmdon	Benefice Holy Communion with speaker Jill Lammond from DAWN (Dignity for all Women now)
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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.

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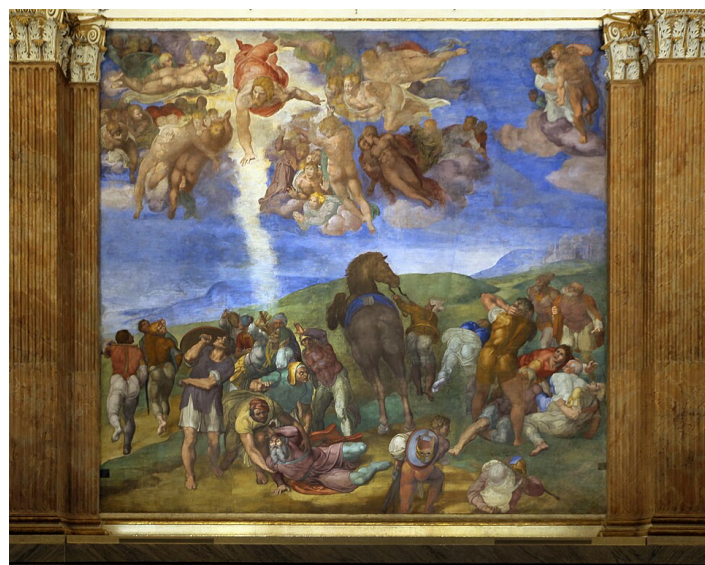
<https://www.facebook.com/astwellbenefice>

Sunday 25th January 2026

The Conversion of Paul

Services in the Benefice:

9.30am	Lois Weedon	Matins
9.30am	Whitfield	Holy Communion (Patronal Festival of St John the Evangelist)
10.30am	Helmdon	Morning Prayer
11.15am	Syresham	Praise & Prayer
11.15am	Wappenham	Holy Communion



The Conversion of Saul is a fresco painted by Michelangelo Buonarroti. It is housed in the Pauline Chapel, Vatican Palace, in Vatican City. This piece depicts the moment that Saul is converted to Christianity while on the road to Damascus. Pope Paul III commissioned the work for the chapel of his namesake.

Collects & Readings for the Conversion of Paul

Collect:

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving presence:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

New Testament Reading: Acts 9:1-22

¹ Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' ⁵ He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' ⁷ The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰ Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' He answered, 'Here I am, Lord.' ¹¹ The Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.' ¹³ But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; ¹⁴ and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.' ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; ¹⁶ I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' ¹⁷ So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, ²⁰ and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.'

²¹ All who heard him were amazed and said, 'Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem among those who invoked this name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?' ²² Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah.

New Testament Reading: Galatians 1:11-17

¹¹ For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; ¹² for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹³ You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. ¹⁴ I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. ¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 19. 27-end

²⁷ Then Peter said in reply, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?' ²⁸ Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

Post Communion Collect:

Almighty Father,
whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world:
may your people,
illumined by your word and sacraments,
shine with the radiance of his glory,
that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed
to the ends of the earth;
for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

***Collects & Readings for the Patronal Festival of
St John the Evangelist (Whitfield)***

Collect:

Merciful Lord,
cast your bright beams of light upon the Church:
that, being enlightened by the teaching of your
blessed apostle and evangelist Saint John,
we may so walk in the light of your truth
that we may at last attain to the light of everlasting
life;
through Jesus Christ your incarnate Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 33. 7-11a

⁷ Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. ⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand, each of them, at the entrance of their tents and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. ⁹ When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. ¹⁰ When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and bow down, all of them, at the entrance of their tents. ¹¹ Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp; but his young assistant, Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the tent.

New Testament Reading: 1 John 1

¹ We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ² this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— ³ we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things so that our^[a] joy may be complete.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷ but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Gospel Reading: John 21:19b-25

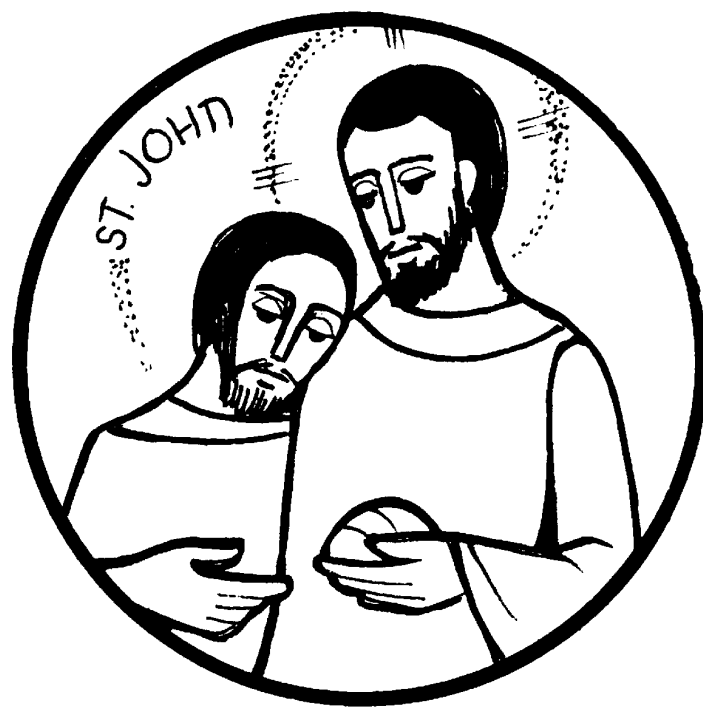
¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?' ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?' ²² Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' ²³ So the rumour spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?'

²⁴ This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Post Communion Collect:

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that the Word made flesh
proclaimed by your apostle John
may, by the celebration of these holy mysteries,
ever abide and live within us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Prayers for the Conversion of Paul

Father God, the light of your revelation on the Road to Damascus brought Paul the gift of faith in Jesus your Son. We share that faith and, in that faith, we bring before you our cares and concerns for the world.

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

Almighty God, we rejoice in the call to belong to the Church, to believe in the Gospel, and to be united with the successors of your Apostles and so we pray for our individual and communal roles in this Benefice.

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

Faithful God, we pray for all who, like the Christians Saul pursued, are persecuted for their faith, and for each of us, that we might be faithful even when we are ridiculed or insulted for practicing our religion. We pray for the poor and the oppressed, and those who live in war torn parts of the world.

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

Loving God,, as the sick were brought to Jesus by their loved ones, so we bring to you now all those whom we long to see healed. May they hear your voice and sense your touch.

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

Gracious God, earth bound we grieve at the loss of loved ones through death, yet we rejoice in you calling them into the fullness of everlasting life.

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

Lord God, heavenly Father, you graciously called St. Paul from being a sinful persecutor to being a follower and a faithful witness. Give us your grace so that we may humbly search our hearts for those sins which separate us from you and find comfort in your grace, mercy and forgiveness.

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, 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:

Alan Jones, 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 refugees fleeing persecution and all victims of hatred, terrorism and war.

BENEFICE CONTACTS

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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
- **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 Bulletin - 25th January 2026

This Sunday we celebrate the Conversion of St Paul, which arguably ranks, after the Resurrection of Jesus, as the most important event in Christian history – maybe all history.

The story is well-known and dramatic as told by Luke in Acts (on three occasions which differ in detail, interestingly) and as depicted in some great paintings. We could probably all make a stab at retelling the story: Persecutor Saul, Damascus Road, blinding light, 'hard to kick against the pricks', Ananias sent to blind 'brother' Saul, something like scales dropping from eyes, Saul baptised. It's a fine way to come to faith in Jesus. A way we might perhaps envy, because of the conviction, the certitude, it carries for Paul in virtue of its extraordinariness.

How was your conversion?

I hope some of you will be responding to that question, 'I never had a conversion!' and I think that's the case with me. I can remember a moment when I took a decision to be a Christian (or perhaps, better, a decision to seek to understand the world, and to live myself, in the light of Christian faith) but I wouldn't call this a conversion - no blinding light.

So, to alter the question, how did you become a Christian (if, indeed you would call yourself one)? I'd call myself a 'cradle Christian', baptised as a baby and brought up in a, shall we say, rather 'lightly' Christian home - my being a Parish Church choirboy didn't involve my parents' regular attendance on Sundays, but they did send me, and it was fundamental to my religious development. Then there was attendance at schools where Christianity was intrinsic. My guess is that something like this will have been the experience of many of you and statistical research suggests that very considerable numbers of the Church of England's members are 'cradle Christians' in this sense.

You don't have to be 'born again' or have a conversion experience to be a 'real' Christian' in any sense other than having been baptised. The socialisation into Christianity I suspect many of us have had can be understood as the workings of the grace of God, and, as such, as producing a kind of Christian faith not inferior to that of those who claim a special revelation.

We don't have to envy Paul his 'conversion'* or even the certitude it seems to bring – doubt can have a positive role in the life of faith. We have been brought into Christ's Church in another way, and that we have been drawn to Christ, and that we are able to open ourselves to being drawn further in, is what matters.

We do, though, have to celebrate Paul's acceptance of Jesus as Lord and the tremendous impact for good that that has had on the whole world ever since.

*The scare quotes will be explained in my Sunday sermon....

Hugh