



The Reverend Will Adams  
Rector Astwell Benefice  
Brookdale Whitfield, NN13 5TQ  
Tel +44(0)1280 850683  
Email:rector@astwellbenefice.co.uk

## HELMDON CHURCH

### NEWSLETTER

September - November 2006

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The Rector writes

#### Astwell Benefice Logo

As you can see we now have a splendid logo for the Astwell Benefice. The designs provided by Sarah Hanson of Whitfield were whittled down to two both inspired by visits to Astwell Castle and features taken from the building. The one chosen by the PCCs is based upon carvings around the main entrance to the castle. Sarah used these to create the 'Astwell Cross'. The fish design is a reference both to the early symbol used by Christians as well as to the history of Astwell and the importance locally of its wells and fish lakes.

#### Feedback from the Questionnaire

Since I last wrote to you the Worship Group has met and examined the feedback it received from the questionnaire circulated around the Astwell Benefice earlier this summer. I promised that I would share the main features that emerged from it with you but firstly I must thank you for taking time to consider the questions posed and for answering them so fully. Many folk also wrote comments on the sheets that were helpful. All comments were collated and together with the tally results they were distributed to all PCC members in every parish.

Over two thirds of those who responded clearly wanted the church to celebrate and participate more closely with village activities and achievements. This was also matched quite closely with the desire for pastoral services marking the key passages of our lives - birth and baptism, marriage and death. Perhaps not so surprising was the reference to the changing nature of our lifestyles. Over 50% of replies talked about

the domestic needs of seeing relatives and friends and taking children to recreational activities on Sundays and for wanting quality family time. Also for an increasing number of people now, Sunday is a working day. From my point of view, far too many people (again over 50%) felt in some ways distant from and not part of the church community - i.e. 'outsiders'. A notable number (just over a third) found church services bewildering and dominated by Holy Communion.

At its recent session, the Worship Group focused on two main issues . These were captured under the headings: Celebratory & Pastoral Services and Distribution and Timings of Principal Sunday Services - Rector Leading Worship.

In order to meet the latter of these two issues, it became evident that a re-modelling of the timing of Principal Sunday Services in a few parishes would have to be considered if the present level of services was to be maintained. This is always difficult. Few of us like change and often use the claim 'we have always done it like this' as though that was to its credit without any reason to support it. Often history shows that the claim isn't true either. Nonetheless, it isn't easy and my hope is that those who are not faced with this problem will be sympathetic and grateful to those who are because it will be due to them that the healthy service pattern across the Astwell Benefice presently enjoyed can be maintained.

The group tackling the former topic wanted a greater amount of time to consider the issues involved. They did however recognise that there were events held in each village in which the church could possibly participate and made a number of suggestions - Songs of Praise in the marquee at the Helmdon Carnival being one of several. Pastoral Services to celebrate baptism and marriage and to mark All Souls' Day were also discussed.

#### Pilgrimages

In bygone days, before the advent of modern means of transport, a pilgrimage could be a massive undertaking and there was always a serious penitential aspect to it. Of course, the value of the undertaking was not only in reaching the destination, but also in the enriching experience of the journey itself. Companions on the journey and those who provided hospitality on the way provided the community in which the pilgrims could flourish. It was a microcosm of life and a reminder that we are always on the journey to the Eternal City. So, whether you have been on a pilgrimage to Rome in the past, are planning to go in the future, or do not foresee having the opportunity to go you can remind yourself that in company with the whole Christian community you continue the pilgrimage of life. Be a good host, be a good traveller and God speed.

God bless.

Will Adams, Rector

## Diary Dates

September 06

- Sat 2nd Wappenham Village Fete Old Rectory  
Sat 9th Jazz Concert and supper 6:30pm - Whitfield  
Play by Brackley Players & supper 7pm in Syresham Village Hall  
Mon 18th "Cash in the attic" Eddie's Hall, Syresham C of E School £7  
contact Antionette Hornby 01280 850060  
Tues 19th Helmdon Lunch at 1 pm in Reading Room  
Wed 27th MU Astwell Branch: 'The Search' by Joy Green  
Sat 30th Helmdon Harvest Supper in the Reading Room

October 06

- Tues 3rd Brackley Deanery Synod @ Aston - le - Walls  
Frid 13th MU Deanery Coffee Morning Brackley Town Hall  
Wed 25th Astwell MU Meeting AGM at 8 pm 12A Church St.  
Sat 28th Prayer Lunch, 1-2pm in the Baptist Chapel Room Weston

November 06

- Sat 11th Craft in action - displays and demonstrations 10-4pm in  
Helmdon Church  
Tues 14th Helmdon PCC meeting 7:30pm  
Fri 17th Benefice Supper meeting on medical ethical issues in  
Syresham  
Tues 21st Lunch at 1pm in the Reading Rooms  
Wed 22nd MU Astwell Branch: 'Family Life' by Marion Thompson  
Thur 23rd Confirmation at 7:30pm in Brackley  
Sat 25th Christmas Bazaar in the Reading Rooms

## Staying afloat

I know church treasurers are best avoided because they want you to put your hand in your pocket all the time. Many people give very generously to Helmdon church and it is lovely to be able to thank people for their gifts. Many more work very hard to clean it, care for it and the churchyard, they give and arrange flowers, organise fund raising ....the list is endless. All time, energy and funds are gratefully received.

Our cashflow does however require a bit of a boost as our outgoings increase year on year. Perhaps I could ask you to reflect on how much your household costs have increased over the last few years and then consider whether you might like to increase your regular giving to the church. It is a very expensive building to run and we need to find £26,000 this year to meet our costs which include our share of the costs of the clergy. If every household in the village contributed £2 per week we would be smiling, but the burden falls on far fewer households.

I have forms if you would like to contribute regularly by standing order - just ring me. Thank you.

Morag Underwood  
768922

## Mothers' Union



- Sept 27th 'THE SEARCH' led by Joy Green  
8pm- 12a Church Street
- Oct 13th Deanery Coffee morning  
10-12 noon Brackley Town Hall
- Oct 25th A.G.M  
8pm 12a Church Street
- Nov 22nd 'Family Life' led by Mrs Marion Thompson  
8pm 12a Church Street

All are welcome to attend our meetings.

Jenny Saunders  
01295 760721

### BENEFACTE SUPPER

**Friday 17th November**  
**Syresham Village Hall 7:30pm**

## Patients in danger

'The Dark side of Medical Ethics'

talk by Dr Gillian Craig

Contact Jean Spendlove 01295 768196

### Friends of St Mary Magdalene

At the Annual General Meeting of the Friends on 4th July a new committee was elected, comprising Roger Miles, Ann Smith, Wiggy Smith, Nikki Phillips, Vanessa Vicars and Liz Woolley. Their first meeting was on Monday 31st July at Wiggy's.

The new Committee will probably run a limited number of events in the first year so that they can become established. Some of the outgoing committee have offered their help if required, but new faces would be welcomed to bring in fresh ideas.

You certainly don't have to be a churchgoer, because the main aim of the "Friends" is to make sure that the ancient building stays beautiful and well maintained. Remember that the building is available to all of us, to be used for many purposes - quiet contemplation, musical events, meetings or anything similar that you can think of.

If you are willing to help by being co-opted onto the committee, by helping on an ad-hoc basis or in any other way, please contact one of the following:

Roger Miles 768964  
Ann Smith 760684  
Wiggy Smith 760953

Nikki Phillips 768202  
Vanessa Vicars 760477  
Liz Woolley 760267

*Chris Gartside*