

FUTURE SERVICES

www.astwellparishes.org.uk

MARCH 2026

Sunday 8th March – Third Sunday of Lent

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

Sunday 15th March – Mothering Sunday

9.30am	Lois Weedon	Holy Communion
10.30am	Syresham	Family Service with the Chapel (at Church)
10.30am	Helmdon	Family Praise & Prayer
11.15am	Wappenham	Family Praise & Prayer

Sunday 22nd March – Fifth 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

Sunday 29th March – Palm Sunday

10.30am	Syresham	Palm Sunday
Benefice		Holy Communion

HOLY WEEK

Monday 30th March

7pm	Whitfield	Compline
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Tuesday 31st March

5.30pm	Syresham	Compline
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Wednesday 1st April

7pm	Lois Weedon	Compline
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Maundy Thursday 2nd April

6.30pm	Helmdon	Passover Meal & Holy Communion
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Good Friday 3rd April

9.30am	Lois Weedon	Meditation
10.30am	Syresham	Procession Church to Chapel (inc service)
11.15am	Wappenham	Meditation
2.30pm	Helmdon	Procession & Holy Communion

Easter Saturday 4th April

9.00pm	Plumpton	Easter Vigil & First Communion of Easter
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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.
www.astwellparishes.org.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/astwellbenefice>

Sunday 1st March 2026

Second Sunday of Lent

Services in the Benefice:

Benefice Holy Communion

with speaker *Jill Lammond*
from *DAWN*

(Dignity for All Women Now)

10.30am

at

Helmdon

LENT SESSIONS

At this year's Lent sessions, we will be reading and discussing David Ford's

'Meeting God in John'

The sessions will run as follows:

at Helmdon Reading Room on Mondays from 23rd February till 30th March, at 11am

and

at Syresham Chapel Schoolroom on Tuesdays from 24th February until 24th March, at 7.40pm
(note change of days and time!)

Please let Hugh know if you would like to come so that the appropriate number of books can be ordered.

BENEFICE CONTACTS

Reverend Hugh White (Rector):

Tel: 01869 347889

Email: rectorastwell@gmail.com

Please contact the Rector or your

Churchwarden/Representative if you have queries about baptisms, weddings, or funerals.

Paul Stothard: Reader & Lay Chair

stothy@live.co.uk, Tel: 01295 760816

Alice Palmer: Benefice Treasurer

alice.palmer16@btinternet.com, Tel: 01280 850252

Fiona Mason: Benefice Safeguarding Officer

fomason@hotmail.com Tel: 01280 850439

Sheena Warren: Chair of Social & Fundraising

Committee sheena@bellplantation.co.uk,

Tel: 01327 860230

Wiggy Smith: Chair of Pastoral Care Committee

wiggysmith44@gmail.com, Tel: 01295 760953

Sarah Rudkin: Benefice Secretary & Pews News

Editor,

rectorastwellbenefice@aol.co.uk, Tel: 01327 830965

Churchwardens /Representatives (for individual church matters):

Helmdon: Cliff Netten, apnetten@hotmail.com

& Paul Stothard, stothy@live.co.uk

Lois Weedon & Weston: Frank Hunter

frank.hunter@btinternet.com

Radstone: Penny Bonner

penny.bonner@btconnect.com

Syresham: Alice Palmer

alice.palmer16@btinternet.com

Wappenham: Sheena Warren

sheena@bellplantation.co.uk

Whitfield: Claire Bonner cbonner00@gmail.com

Regular events held in the Benefice:

- **Helmdon Coffee Morning** is held each Tuesday, 10 am-12 noon in the Reading Room
- **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 – 1st March 2026

Nicodemus, the focus of this Sunday's Gospel, is an intriguing figure. He appears in the Bible only in John's Gospel. He is a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews, so a man of status, learning and also presumably of some intelligence. He is impressed by Jesus – though his coming by night suggests he doesn't want that to be widely known - but he finds it hard to get his head round what Jesus says about being born 'from above' or 'again' (the single Greek word used can mean either, possibly confusingly) and his last words in the conversation are 'how can these things be?' rather than 'Ah, now I see what you mean.' He still seems to be in the dark, metaphorically as well as literally. He has not grasped either what Jesus means in their conversation or Jesus' true nature and there is no indication that his commitment to Jesus has developed beyond his understanding that Jesus has come from God.

However, in Chapter seven Nicodemus responds to the hostility towards Jesus shown by his fellow Pharisees and their desire to arrest him like this: *Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 'Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?' The Pharisees reply sharply, 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.'* Here, if he hasn't exactly come out for Jesus, Nicodemus has taken something of a stand on his behalf and got a flea in his ear for his troubles.

Still, this passage doesn't necessarily imply any kind of committed discipleship, though we might wonder. Nicodemus' last appearance, however, shows a degree of commitment to Jesus greater than we might expect on the evidence of Nicodemus' two previous appearances. In Chapter 19, after the crucifixion, we read how Nicodemus joins Joseph of Arimathea in burying Jesus, *'Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths'* and they lay Jesus in the tomb.

That 'who had *at first* come to Jesus by night' may indicate that Nicodemus is prepared now to risk being seen in the light as a follower of Jesus. And certainly, that hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes is a hugely extravagant gift.

One writer speaks of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (the latter a *secret* disciple of Jesus because he feared the Jews) as 'two outstanding men [who] having failed to stand up for Christ during his life, came to shed their tears too late after his death.' I think I'd want less to criticise than to emphasise Nicodemus' spiritual progress.

Many people are impressed by Jesus without being able to accept fully the account he gives of himself. That Nicodemus makes the progress he does suggests that a rather dispassionate and perhaps qualified admiration of Jesus can turn, by God's grace, into firm commitment to him, into love of him. Perhaps that might encourage some of us.

Hugh