

**You are invited
to a public meeting
to discuss the possible closure of
St Helen's Church, Brigsley
7.30 pm
Tuesday, 19 June
St Helen's Brigsley**

(more information on the reverse side)

St Helen's Church, Brigsley – Possible Closure

St Helen's Church is beautiful and beloved. Many people in the village love the fact of the church, the way the light falls, the strong memories that stir when we walk around the graveyard and remember family and friends, and the fun of having children lead us through the carol service. But for most of the year, and for many years, there are few people who actually seek to worship in Brigsley.

When the Waltham Group was formed, and I came as Rector, there were five people on the electoral roll, and about the same number who gathered for worship each month. The congregation were deeply committed to each other and to the place, and had worked for many years to try to keep St Helen's going – but it was getting hard.

For many years, St Helen's met its financial commitments through one significant fundraising event which raised £2000 each year. Two members – Sally and Shirley – worked together to host a charity lunch in Sally's garden, which was supported in large part by friends from outside the village. The money raised covered the insurance, the bills, and the costs of being a church. When Shirley turned 80, she said quite rightly that it was time to stop. Since then, we have been drawing down on the bit of savings we had, and we are making the last insurance payment we can afford this month.

At the same time, attendance at worship became harder as the congregation aged. Shirley moved away. John, who tended the grounds and did a million hidden things, became ill and died in 2016. Doreen became housebound, and hasn't been able to come to church since last summer -and of course, we said goodbye and buried her today.

Of those who remain, there is a clear sense that it is time to let go. Members of the village are very kind and supportive in particular ways: helping to clean, cutting the grass, offering support and hospitality at the Carol Service. You may even remember the moment when the electrics blew, mid Carol Service, and the organ died, and we just kept singing anyway. There is much good will in Brigsley, but there seems to be no real interest in maintaining the day to day life of the church.

Moreover, those individuals who are curious about faith and wanting to grow can best do that in a larger, more vibrant faith community. The little congregation at Brigsley have always welcomed people well – but growth in faith is better supported in the larger more diverse community at All Saints, Waltham, and there is no longer need for a separate worshipping community in Brigsley with Waltham only a mile and a half away, and with Ashby also so close for those who prefer to worship from the Book of Common Prayer.

Closing a church is sad and painful for all. No one wants to let go. But at this point, it seems like the only sensible option. And yet – maybe the village will surprise us. Do you want this church to remain open? It will only be possible if there is a long term commitment of time and money from members of the village. We would love to meet with you at 7.30 pm, on Tuesday, 19 June at St Helen's Brigsley to talk about the future and remember all that is good in this place. If you would like to be involved in the conversation but cannot come on the 19th, please get in touch by email (kimberly@walthamgroupchurches.co.uk) or phone (01472 822172).

Kimberly Bohan
Rector, Waltham Group Churches
12 June, 2018