

**ST MARY THE VIRGIN GREAT BENTLEY**  
**Parochial Church Council Minutes**  
**Wednesday 16 July 2025 Church Room at 7.30 pm**

**Opening prayer**

- 1 **Minutes of the previous meeting from Thursday 29 May 2025:** were agreed and signed by the vicar.
  
- 2 **Matters arising:** item 8 it was agreed that fire drills be undertaken every year. Item 8 - the bell hatch cannot be considered as an emergency exit. It was agreed a moveable smoke alarm should be in place during bell practise. The organist is happy to play for the service on the green in August, which is being arranged with the Methodist church. The approved PCC minutes are now available to view on the website.
  
- 3 **Sharon's news & update on parish share:** members of the congregation are welcome to share ministry by leading services, more information about this will be made available in the near future.  
A meeting was recently held with PCC representatives from the benefice where the proposed parish share was revisited. It was suggested that wealthier parishes assist those who were unable to fully meet the cost of their share. A spreadsheet was circulated to attendees outlining historical and current figures for all four parishes.  
It was agreed that the PCC defer their decision until September when the parish share figures for 2026 would be available. The PCC will liaise with St Osyth PCC to gauge their view on this matter. There was a suggestion that a benefice liaison committee be formed so that benefice meetings could be held and the benefice could work together.
  
- 4 **Financial report:** was briefly discussed. A draft of the article on legacies was agreed by the PCC and will be published in the September parish magazine. There will be a stall at the flower show and also the village show to offer information on the initiative.  
A meeting with the architect and the diocese representative was held to discuss work on the porch. Costs for the initial work were in the region of £8000. Details

were circulated to attendees. Funds were available to cover the cost of the initial work, and permission was sought from the PCC to start the project and agreed by those present.

- 5 **Safeguarding update:** a new safeguarding dashboard is being rolled out to safeguarding teams. Additional members are required to create a safeguarding team and these will have access to the dashboard. Documents will be changing. Two more members of the PCC have completed their statutory foundation training. DBS checks for pastoral team members and wardens were discussed. Concerns were raised that there might be increasing demand for food bank services in the village.
  
- 6 **Health and safety:** portable appliance testing (PAT) has been completed and cost £220 inc VAT. It was proposed that checks were made every two years and this was agreed by the PCC.  
A risk assessment of the churchyard has been undertaken and findings will be shared at the informal meeting Friday 25 July. Some headstones require attention. Lone worker guidance has been placed on the notice board by the stairs to the tower and a sign has been put in the kitchen regarding the use of the steps. The first aid course will be held in September.
  
- 7 **Decisions over what information should go on the church website or Onedrive:** and it was also suggested that shared Google spreadsheets could be used to keep event diaries up to date. These methods would allow all PCC documentation to be stored and accessible in one place.
  
- 8 **Permission sought from the PCC to:**
  - submit an application for a faculty to carry out restoration work on the bells, frame, bearings and pulleys – was agreed by those present. Costs were reported to be in the region of £72k; however an application was also being made to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
  - with reference to item 12 of previous minutes, raise funds for the installation of a simulator as teaching equipment - It was understood that a faculty was not required for the installation of the simulator, but permission from the archdeacon would be needed. It was decided to delay a decision to ascertain if funds for the simulator could be delayed until repairs had been completed.

- 9 **Participation in Ride & Stride event 13 September:** posters will be displayed at church to advertise this event and St Mary's has been registered as a participating church. Cyclists and walkers will be able to use facilities on the day which coincides with this year's flower festival.
  
- 10 **Flower festival weekend:** due to unforeseen circumstances, letters to participating artists did not go out in June; however someone has recently offered to organise the art submissions. Due to time restraints the PCC decided it was best to not include art this year. The theme for this year's festival will be 'Great Bentley past'.
  
- 11 **Sound system:** concerns were raised about sound problems at some recent services; however this was considered to be due to incorrect use of the equipment
  
- 12 **Charitable giving:** full details are given in the annual report. It was agreed that proceeds from a coffee morning could be given to St Helena Hospice, or a percentage of funds raised from the kitchen at the flower festival.
  
- 13 **Theme for Christmas tree festival:** will be decided at next PCC.
  
- 14 **Any other business:** concerns over health and hygiene were raised due to the amount of bat droppings found in church. As bats roost in the church and are protected by law, it was felt that they were doing all they could by protecting surfaces with plastic covers and regularly disinfecting and vacuuming floors.
  
- 15 **The date for the next PCC meeting:** will be Wednesday 1 October 2025 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed with The Grace at 9.25 pm.