

ST MARY THE VIRGIN GREAT BENTLEY
Parochial Church Council Minutes
Wednesday 25 March 2026 Church Room at 7.30 pm

Opening prayer

- 1 **Minutes of the previous meeting from Wednesday 28 January 2025:** were agreed and signed by the chairperson.

- 2 **Matters arising:** item 4, no firm responses to the Pleshey retreat in June. It was suggested that lack of response was due to the clash with the village carnival. AOB the standing committee have no objection to the minutes of standing committee meetings remaining on the church shared drive.

- 3 **Vicar's update:** new worship service books were discussed at the joint PCC meeting and will be adopted by all four churches.
The archdeacon and area dean are happy to hold a meeting so that all four PCCs can ask questions about joining together into one new benefice.

- 4 **Financial report:** (see attached). It was suggested that a recent bequest might be used to purchase doors for the new porch. Questions were raised about the potential costs to fully replace rather than repair the porch; however attendees were reminded that action was informed by the recent quinquennial report. A meeting was recently held with the architect and a quote for replacing the porch is awaited.
- the accounts for 2025 were approved by the PCC

- 5 **PCC to agree/decline data privacy notice:**(see attached).
There was a brief discussion about the draft data privacy notice. The notice sets out to the church family how the PCC manage their data.
Questions were raised about how and where data would be stored, how it can be protected and who would be responsible for it. These issues will form part of the data protection policy. The privacy notice was approved by PCC.

- 6 **Safeguarding:**
 - data protection & retention of safeguarding materials: it was agreed that this would be discussed at the next PCC.
 - PCC to agree & vote on procedure for security safeguarding information during a vacancy: to be discussed at the next PCC.
 - the PCC discussed and adopted a job description for the voluntary role of Children's Worker.

- 7 **Deanery synod update:** churchwardens will be sworn in at a service in July at St James' Church Clacton. St Mary's Church will host the next deanery synod meeting in November. The bishop will be holding a young people's session at Elmstead Market Church in May.

Update on use of Christians Against Poverty funds – a booklet of useful information has been developed to hand out to those in need.

St Mary's has been advised that they could apply to hold food bank vouchers for distribution for those in need.

Some churches are offering debt management services and the use of their wi-fi.

Brightlingsea Church are utilising an app that connects them to local sources of surplus food which they use for church refreshments. The scheme helps to prevent food waste and save resources.

This year's elections for deanery synod were discussed.

Bell Ringing update: still waiting on the granting of the faculty to restore the bells and frame. In the meantime members can direct any questions to the Bell Captain

- 8 **Health & safety update:** it was hoped that a plan will be reviewed ahead of the bell repairs.

There was a discussion about fitting an outside light to assist those accessing the church hall/kitchen in darkness. This would replace the ground level light that was broken.

- 9 **PCC to consider Instagram page for St Mary's Church:** this was agreed.

- 10 **Upgrading hard standing by porch and kitchen door:** it was agreed that car access to the churchyard continue to be limited to disabled access and for loading/unloading only.

- 11 **Men's sheds:** the scheme helps men with mental health issues through regular practical activities. It was suggested that a community shed could perhaps be set up in the churchyard in the future.

- 12 **Confirm agreement & date for an art festival:** a weekend in October was suggested. The organiser will be invited to the next meeting to discuss their plans.

- 13 **Any Other Business:**

Stall at the village show – it was agreed that the church should continue have a stall at the show.

Length of Sunday services – was discussed.

Children's Good Friday workshop: was discussed and will go ahead as planned.

14 **The date for the next PCC meeting:** will be on Wednesday 10 June 2026 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed with The Grace at 9.15 pm