

**ST MARY THE VIRGIN GREAT BENTLEY**  
**Parochial Church Council Minutes**  
**Wednesday 28 January 2026 Church Room at 7.30 pm**

- 1 **Minutes of the previous meeting from Wednesday 26 November 2025:** were agreed and signed.
  
- 2 **Matters arising:** item 8, the under pew heaters cannot be fixed. Item 12, a Lent course will now be held at St Mary's Church.
  
- 3 **Sharon's update:** the Lent course will take place over 4 weeks in March. A retreat day at Pleshey is being planned for Saturday 27 June, costs to follow. A longer Pleshey retreat (Cursillo) has been booked for Thursday 11 to 14 June, further details will follow. A visitation has been arranged for 8 July (churchwardens).
  
- 4 **Financial report:** (see attached financial report for January, proposed dates for coffee mornings and breakdown of charitable giving 2025). Many attendees were interested in accepting an invitation to visit the hospice to learn more about the services they provide. It was suggested that the Nine Lessons and Carols service be dedicated to the hospice and any proceeds from the collection be donated to them. The PCC were very pleased that the church had been able to support several charities in 2025.  
The PCC agreed to temporarily pay the mid-point and end-point tranche of money to the bell contractor on the understanding that the money would be reimbursed to church funds shortly afterwards.
  
- 5 **Safeguarding:** work on the safeguarding dashboard continues.
  - Dashboard overview - the PCC were briefly shown what the dashboard looked like on the computer. The PCC would need to decide and agree on several action points prompted by the dashboard. Work must be completed within the next 9 months in order to be compliant. There was a discussion about how the new dashboard impacted on other church activities. No regular youth activities take place at the church.
  
- 6 **Health and safety:** notices have been placed in the pews to warn about the hot floor heaters. No other issues to report at present.
  
- 7 **Bell ringing/restoration project:** sufficient funds have hopefully been raised for the bell work to be undertaken. When the charity give the go ahead the preferred contractor can be appointed. A lot of work has been required following charity's agreement in principle, but there has been very good support. Everyone looks forward to a service of dedication, hopefully early next year.

8 **PCC to agree data privacy & data protection policies:** a recent audit highlighted that the PCC does not have any data protection policies in place. The diocese recommends each PCC should have a data protection policy, privacy notice and written procedures and suggests there should be a data protection lead/team. The secretary produced a privacy notice and data protection policy using templates from the diocese for presentation at the last meeting; but as there continue to be issues with attendees accessing the documents, it was agreed the matter be deferred to the next meeting.

**Events sub-committee:** aims to help the PCC organise existing regular events, collect ideas from the church community for new events and plan further ahead. The PCC were happy for them to continue and look forward to hearing what events they would like to implement. An informal meeting was suggested to share what went well or could be improved following last year's Christmas tree festival.

9 **Baked potato lunch:** this event has been planned for the 25 April at 12.30 pm. Volunteers are in place and hope to cater for 42 people.

10 **Important dates for 2026:**

May Fair - 16 May

Service on the green - 6 September

Flower Festival - 19 & 20 September

Harvest Festival - 4 October

Christmas Tree Festival- 5 & 6 December

It was suggested that it might be better to hold a separate event for the art show.

**Any other business:**

**Bell ringers** - some thought it would benice to acknowledge the bell ringers before the start of the service as they leave. There was a brief discussion about how much money was raised from the produce stall last year and whether it might continue this year.

**Some of secretary's email attachments not being received by PCC** – was briefly discussed.

**Access to the church OneDrive** – the secretary has sent out links to all PCC members. Some had successfully accessed the drive and viewed documents.

12 **The date for the next PCC meeting** will be on Wednesday 25 March 2026 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting finished at 21.04 pm with The Grace.