



St. Mark's Church Parochial Church Council

Minutes of PCC Meeting - 19 July 2026



The PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mark, Bedford Charity Number 1164416.
All minutes are available on our website www.stmarkschurch.com

The meeting was held following the 9:30 Communion Service and opened with prayers

Apologies

Jim and Avril Williams, Morag Stewart and Tim Wilkes

Resignation as Trustee to the PCC

Vince Holloway

Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the meeting on 26 April 2026 had been circulated and are available on the church website

Matters Arising

There being no matters arising the minutes were agreed.

Philip Whitlock mentioned that he and Val Simmonds had not been added to the list of PCC members on the Agenda. Charlie agreed to action the amendment.

Leadership Team Report

Elizabeth gave details of the Leadership Team Meeting held on 12 July 2026.

- The Team discussed the recent very hot weather, with the need to consider various options available that will help cool the Church building, this is ongoing at the present time.
- Ian updated the Leadership Team with the current financial situation which he will give in his report at this meeting. Jim updated on Gift Aid.
- Ian & Diana had reported that all was going well with pre-school and will update the PCC.
- Janine had confirmed that normally there are around 30-35 attending chat and play weekly, a number of those children are going into our Pre-School in September. Janine is hoping that some will still come to Chat & Play if they are able to. We would like to say thank you to Janine for organising this and to Lynne & Carolyn who help her.
- Avril had given her report on the Garden of Remembrance and an update will be at this meeting.
- The Church Office is working well. Thank you to Wendy who will update with her report today.
- Charlie updated on the Pastoral Team, there are several people unwell at present.
- Charlie emails out the Parish News weekly, around 190 and a few are sent out in the post from the Church Office, which is much appreciated by all. If anyone would like to receive a copy please contact the Church Office.
- The Harvest Festival weekend will start with a quiz on Saturday 5 September organised by Diana and her daughter Laura followed on the Sunday by our Harvest Festival Service with donations going to the Food Bank. A Hog Roast will follow where all are welcome to ask family/friends to come and enjoy. Hopefully the weather will be kind to us like last year!
- Updates on the Garden of Remembrance, Safeguarding and the Deanery will be given as individual reports to the PCC in the minutes.
- The Commemoration Service will be held on Sunday 1 November @ 3pm with the speaker being Father Simon Tibbs and the Remembrance Sunday Service will be on 8 November @ 9.30am
- Christian Aid week was held on 10 to 17 May and a total of £320 was raised including gift aid. Thank you to Carolyn who organises this each year.
- St Mark's celebrates its 50th Anniversary next year. We have a small group discussing various events that we are hoping to hold next year to celebrate this special occasion. We will be launching this soon. Di Johnson, for the sub-group, said that plans were being considered for 5/6 events during the year with the visit of the new Bishop of St Alban's for the initial service of celebration. Ideas to celebrate the 50th Anniversary were welcomed by Di and the sub-group.

Finance

Ian gave a report on the Main Church Account, Pre School and Churchyard/GOR as at the end of June which is 10 months of our Financial Year completed. Finance Schedules up to 30/06/26 detailing key budget issues were handed out to all attendees.

- **Main Account** -Total balances £ 141, 790.26 credit. This is showing deficit currently of -£2,886.48 but not a concern as includes numerous additional expenses incurred during the year (as detailed on the schedules) including £5,405 Gift Aid payment which whilst submitted was not received by the month end.
- There will be some costs associated with the 50th Year Celebrations and Diana had approached the 50/50 Committee to see if this was something that 50/50 could support, it was agreed by the committee that this was a great idea and exactly in line with the aims for 50/50 which was to fund things that were "nice to do".
- **Pre School** Total balances £ 90,206.81 credit (including redundancy reserve). Pre School is operating well this year showing a surplus £14,779.73 and roll numbers/finances are good, £24,919 has been paid to the church main account for hire and copying this financial year so far. One long standing member of staff had sadly retired which will allow £7,424 to be released from the current redundancy reserve of £58,304. Fees will be increased from September. Staff numbers/recruitment will be looked at during the summer following the resignation. Charlie thanked Diana, Ian and Corinne for all their hard work with Pre School supporting Helen.
- **Churchyards/GOR** Total balances £56,197.06 credit, there are no concerns with finances. Currently showing a surplus £16,304.56 and includes work on fence replacement and work on tree maintenance. Priority now will be to deal with landscaping of the entire Garden to replace lost plants and especially the area by the main doors to the church.
- **Gift Aid** Claims with HMRC are up to date with 1 claim remaining for the period up to the end of this financial year 31/08/26

Charlie thanked Ian and Jim for their tireless work on our behalf.

Centre Management

- Wendy advised that the bookings were going well. Monthly income was good although slightly down from cancellations due to the heat.
- Maintenance plans during the summer holiday include resealing the hall floors and decorating the toilets. There are other areas in the building that need freshening up which she would discuss with Ian for financial clarification.
- There has been a new electric (smart) meter fitted.
- An engineer visited St Mark's to fix the ongoing problems with the dishwasher, we have been advised we need a replacement water softener. Wendy has this in hand.
- Two new fans had been purchased for the Wren and Biffa Rooms and there were plans in hand to landscape the area of garden by the main door to the church.
- Wendy recorded her appreciation to all the regular office volunteers, and for Barry and Mike Cooper for their continued support.
- Charlie thanked Wendy and her team of volunteers for her hard work. He also mentioned that the Leadership Team would be looking into a range of options regarding Air Conditioning/cooling throughout the Church and Centre.

Pre-School

Di Johnson gave the following report:

- Pre-school is going well at present. Numbers are good with new children registered for September to replace those moving on to local primary schools and their nursery units.
- A number of those new children currently attend Chat and Play sessions which continue to attract good numbers of babies, toddlers and their parents and carers.
- Staffing levels are good; one much-valued member of staff is sadly leaving this term after some 26 years of service. Steps are being taken to recruit a replacement.
- Staff training continues to be undertaken regularly with all staff undertaking the required training in Safeguarding and Early Years' practice together with First Aid, Food Hygiene etc.

Worship Arrangements

Charlie, after discussion with Janet Warren, advised the PCC that she had agreed to go forward as a Lay Leader of Worship. This required the ratification of the PCC which was given unanimously. Janet would be joining the Ministry Team. In response to a question, it was confirmed that Janet would attend formal training with the Diocese, alongside her participation at St Mark's.

Electoral Roll Arrangements

The Membership Numbers are - 132 Adults and 4 children.

Pastoral Support

- Charlie reported that there were a few members of our congregation that were unwell or unable to come to church.
- Arrangements for the Commemoration Service in November were in hand and the speaker, Fr Simon Tibbs, had been confirmed.

Garden of Remembrance

Elizabeth read the following report on behalf of Avril

- It has been a busy few months in the Garden with the ivy being removed next to the Vicarage garden. The fences had been held up by the ivy and required to be replaced. Rusty did a great job doing that despite the heat.
- Apex came and did some tree trimming and removed the trees in front of the vestry which had caused root damage to the drains. Rusty is going to clear the ground and paint the grills and cladding. Charlie is going sort out planting and landscaping and the rest of the Garden will see new planting where plants have died. Obviously, it is going to be quite a bit of expense, and it might be worth asking for donations to go towards this project.
- We have not had many interments in this hot weather, and a few have been in the Magnolia Kerb.
- Avril thanked Fiona and Sue who valiantly remove the dead flowers and to John the Gardener for all his hard work. She also thanked Alan Kirk for his great support which was much appreciated.

Safeguarding Update

Mike Cooper thanked the two new PCC members for completing the required Diocesan on-line training. He then informed the PCC that there had been a serious Safeguarding incident reported and read a prepared statement to the PCC which is added at the end of these minutes. Charlie thanked Mike for his work as Safeguarding Officer and assured the Trustees all correct procedures had been followed by St Marks and the matter was being dealt with by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and the Police.

Sam confirmed that in accordance with the decision of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of 26 April 2026, St Mark's had delegated responsibility for reporting such Safeguarding and Serious Incidents to the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) and current members of the Leadership Team. Charlie advised that any media or other enquiries would be handled by the Diocesan Communications Department.

Mission Matters

Sam informed the PCC that the Leadership Team had proposed that St Mark's supports the Bedford Food Bank for our Harvest Mission, as it resonated with the congregation and we have links with the charity through Barry Southam.

At the last PCC meeting the suggestion of supporting an overseas charity was raised, and an example of one had been given. Sam had investigated into this charity, including into the charity finances, which had shown some concern. Sam explained the reasons why we need to be cautious when supporting an overseas charity and the due diligence we would need to follow with the Charity Commission. When discussing this at the Leadership Team meeting on 12 July it had been agreed that we could support overseas charities through Christian Aid, which had good funding and was respected, and gave the reassurance of confidence in the organisation. Sam assured the PCC that this does not stop us supporting an overseas charity in the future should there be a particular issue raised, and the necessary procedures followed.

Deanery

Sam reported that appointments had been made in Wootton, St Peter's Church, Bedford, and that Renhold Parish were holding interviews.

The Assistant Rural Dean, David Thomas, had been in hospital for a month with a heart condition so was out of action. The Area Dean, Helen Stewart, was extremely busy due to the situation in the Deanery, so Sam had come out of retirement to assist her on a temporary basis.

It was recorded that St Mark's Church has paid its Parish Share in full this year as it had always done.

Date of Next Meeting

25 October 2026

The meeting closed with 'The Grace'.

Serious Safeguarding Incident St Mark's Church

Statement to PCC on Sunday 19 July 2026

On 24 May 2026, the Vicar, The Reverend Canon Charles Royden, and the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), Mr Mike Cooper, were notified by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team that a Serious Safeguarding Incident Report (SIR) has been formally raised concerning a member of St Mark's Church, Bedford.

The reason for the SIR is that there is currently an active police investigation involving this individual. St Mark's Leadership Team shares safeguarding oversight for the parish and is working in full partnership with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, who has met with the Police and other authorities. The clergy and PSO have met with diocesan staff to ensure that all appropriate actions, monitoring, and procedures are in place. These steps follow the approved St Albans Diocesan safeguarding procedures, and in line with the CofE House of Bishop's guidelines, and Trustees can be assured that all necessary measures are being taken.

Following Police guidance, the Leadership Team asks that no one attempts to investigate, comment publicly, or speculate, as this could risk prejudicing the ongoing police enquiries. As Trustees, you have an important role in supporting a safe and responsible church culture. If you hear questions, speculation, or rumours, please discourage this and inform Mr Mike Cooper (PSO). Any further questions should also be directed to him. This helps protect those involved and safeguards the integrity of the process.

Further updates will be provided when it is lawful and appropriate to do so. Thank you for your discretion, steadiness, and commitment to safeguarding.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Royden', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Reverend Canon Charles Royden
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