

St Mark's Church Parochial Church Council

Minutes of the PCC Meeting 8 February 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.

Apologies Janet Ibberson

Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the 12 October 2025 meeting had been circulated and are available on the church website.

Matters Arising

No matters arising

Leadership Report

Elizabeth gave details of the Leadership Meeting held on 2 February.

- The Christmas services went well, with increased numbers on previous years and positive feedback all round.
- Gerrie had suggested placing a Christmas Crib in the foyer for Christmas 2026. The Leadership Team agreed this would be a good idea. Gerrie will organise.
- Ian gave details of the finances for the Sep – Jan period. Full report later.
- Work had taken place to update the central heating system with new controls installed for energy saving.
- Ian and Di reported that Pre-School was running well.
- Janine had advised all was going well with Chat and Play, with 20 -25 attending. Lynne and Di help when needed.
- Enquiries for the Garden of Remembrance had been quiet over the Christmas. Update to follow at this meeting.
- Centre Management, all running well, report to follow at this meeting.
- Mike advised that there had been no safeguarding issues. Details in Mike's report later. The Archdeacon Visitation this year will be entirely on Safeguarding.
- Charlie gave details regarding Pastoral Support. Approximately 190 copies of Parish News are emailed each week.
- Mothering Sunday, on 15 March, the Flower Team will organise flower posies and cakes after the service.
- The Ash Wednesday Service will be at 7.30pm on 18 February. The Lent Course will be held on 5 and 12 March.
- Easter services: morning and evening services in the Chapel during Holy Week. Maundy Thursday service at 7.30pm in Church. Good Friday services, 3 April, at 6.30am and 9.30am.
- Corinne and Laura will organise an Easter Raffle again.
- Barry and Jim continue to run regular fire alarm tests and will update signage where necessary.
- St Mark's 50th Anniversary will be 25 April 2027, but celebrations, with various events, will take place throughout the year. A logo will be designed to feature on event publicity.
- The date for Carols in the Car Park this year will be brought forward to Saturday 12 December.
- The APCM will be held on 26 April 2026, after the 9.30am service.
- The next Leadership Team meeting will be held on 29 March.

Finance

- Ian gave details of the church finances for the first five months of the financial year.
- The Main Account showed a deficit of £1 331.37. This was much better than expected, given the costs involved in upgrading the church heating, and the flooding from the roof.
- Donations towards the cost of upgrading the heating had been exceptional and showed, once again, the generosity of members of the congregation.
- The Mission Project had raised £4 930. Again, showing the generosity of members of the congregation.

- A further payment, covering the blocked drains, will be made in the next accounting period.
- An anonymous donation had been made to purchase a further microphone for the church.
- Ian confirmed that we are compliant with our reserves policy.
- The Gift Aid claim on offerings (Sep-Dec) totalled £5 341.80. G.A. on the Boiler Donations totalled £2 962.50, and on the Foodbank donations, £880.00.
- The Pre-School account was showing a surplus of £22 016.71, which had enabled a rental payment of £ 8 443 for the period to be made.
- Ian advised that close monitoring of the finances and staff working hours was ongoing. The redundancy reserves are being met and a small reduction has been achieved following a member of staff leaving and adjustments in hours for another staff member.
- Fees will be reviewed once the increase in the National Living Wage is introduced in April.
- The Garden of Remembrance account is showing a surplus for the period of £5 314.21. The investment in additional kerbs last year is generating income now.
- Ian advised that the Parish Share for St Mark's has decreased by £1 100 for this calendar year, due to revisions in the calculation process. Sam explained that, following improved revenues from investments by the Diocese, it had been possible to be less reliant placing increases on individual churches, with some enjoying a slight reduction.
- Members again thanked Ian for the continuing hard work in keeping the Church finances under such tight control.

Centre Management

- Wendy advised that there are 46 groups meeting at St. Mark's.
- The curtains throughout the premises are being cleaned.
- Heating upgrades have been completed, including solar maintenance and all is working well. There are some additional changes being made to the system that will ensure all areas of the building run efficiently. These include extra radiators in the office and foyer. Chester's have been very good in all the work they have undertaken for us, and the changes have not affected any of the hirers. A number of the hire groups have contributed to the upgrades and letters of thanks have been sent.
- Extensive work has been required to clear the drainpipes around the building.
- Other maintenance work in the future includes replacing a blown window in the Wren Room, Replacement of some fascia boards, and renovation of sleepers.

Preschool

- Numbers are currently good and there is a waiting list.
- Di advised that the Leadership Team had agreed to her and Ian's proposal that we should use professional employment services for the future. Planned wide ranging changes in the Employment Rights Act and the need to update our employment handbook and employment contracts, in line with these changes, meant that this was the correct time to do this. The cost would be £330 per month to cover all of these services, plus any individual employment matters that will inevitably arise.
- Chat and Play continues to have a good feed in level into Pre-School.
- Thanks to Di, Ian and Charlie, who oversee the management of Preschool on behalf of trustees.

Worship Arrangements

- All running well.

Items from the Ministers

- All is well, nothing to report.

Electoral Roll Arrangements

- Avril reported that there are currently 142 people on the Electoral Roll.
- Any changes of people's details, or members of the congregation wishing to be added to the electoral roll, should complete one of the forms available in the foyer or email Avril (Electoral Roll Officer) on aj56@btinternet.com

Pastoral Support

- All running well. Charlie thanked Wendy Waters and the team and asked to be advised if any members of the congregation knew of anyone needing to be contacted or visited.

Garden of Remembrance

- All going well. Visitors compliment on how lovely and peaceful the garden is.
- The leaflet holder, at the entrance to the garden, seems very popular and needs regular topping up.
- We have had a number of requests for re-blackening. Following a quiet period, there are 5 interments arranged before the end of March and 3 possible reservations.

Safeguarding Update

- Mike Cooper confirmed to the meeting that there had been no Serious Incidents or Safeguarding Issues.
- All trustees are up to date with their training. Preschool staff also meet all of the required training levels, including Domestic Abuse training.
- Mike advised that we are required to update the policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders. It was proposed and agreed that we adopt and use the Diocesan Policy.
- We are required to review our procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns or allegations, annually. Our reporting line is Mike or Charlie to be involved in the first instance, followed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.
- Our policy document on the Use of Social Media will be monitored to ensure that it meets current National Guidelines. It was agreed to adopt the Diocesan policy.
- We are required to identify Church and Non Church activities to the Diocese this month. These are as follows: Church, Pre-School and Chat & Play. Non Church, Open House, Brownies and Guides, Theatretrain.

Mission Matters

- Sam advised that we would be looking at similar projects to the Bedford Foodbank this year. It was a local project everyone could relate to, and financial support was equally important in being able fund the operating costs. If anyone had ideas for other projects we could support please let him know.

Deanery

- All was running well within the Deanery, with Helen Stewart the new Area Dean.
- Bishop Richard is currently acting Diocesan Bishop also. It is anticipated that a new Bishop of St Albans will be announced in the coming weeks.

Dates of next meetings.

Date of next meeting to be advised.

APCM will be held at 11.00 on 26 April 2026.

With no further business the meeting closed with The Grace.