

**PARISH OF SOUTHMINSTER
MAGAZINE OF THE
CHURCH OF ST LEONARD**

and also for Steeple Parish

**The Church of
St Lawrence & All Saints**

StL



JANUARY 2026

How is your walk with God?

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To cover our costs we have to charge for this magazine. The charge per issue is £1 but if you pay for the whole year in advance the charge will be £10 - (obviously a bit saved!)

If you receive this printed version please tell your deliverer whether you want to continue from January 2026.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

*Articles for the February magazine should be with Kath Dunstan by, at the latest, **Sunday 18th January** New contributors are welcome.*

Jenny Pratt's Reflection

Happy new year. Are you ready? Ready? Surely all the preparations are done and dusted. We've had Christmas, Summer holidays are months away, what do we need to be ready for? There are so many things we have to be ready for – visitors, events, church, etc. There are also the things that happen that you never expect, but happen. In our daily living we need to be ready to face whatever the Lord puts before us. After all, Jesus is coming again one day – be prepared, be ready.

Here is a lady who wasn't ready.

“Well I wasn't ready for that to happen. I was sweeping out the foyer of our small Inn when these men knocked on the door. I thought they were cold callers, so I ignored them. But they were persistent and kept knocking until I finally opened the door. Were they cold callers? Well they certainly looked frozen. They also looked very rich, so I invited them in, hoping they might want a room.

Now which room can I give them? I wasn't ready for this. If I had known they were coming I could have been more prepared. I could have done that Spring cleaning I was going to do last Autumn. I could have got cakes or caviar, or whatever it is rich people eat. If I had been given enough time, I could have even given the place a lick of paint.

Fortunately they said they couldn't stay because they were looking for the King of the Jews. King? I don't remember any king being born around here. The only king I know about is the one who lives in Jerusalem – King Herod. But the men said that they have already tried him. So I told

them they must be mistaken, it must have happened somewhere else. But they insisted that his star had come to rest here in Bethlehem.

Nope, I cannot think of any prince being born around here. The last baby born here as I remember was around the time of the census. Now let me think, that was ages ago, a couple of months, maybe even a year or two. I remember this couple, they had been trying to find a room without success. The woman looked exhausted, poor luv. Yes, I remember, we offered them the stable, it was the best we could do, we were really full to capacity. I wasn't ready for so many people coming here. They were so grateful, but they certainly didn't look like royalty. Come on now, I would not have put royalty in the stable for the night! I would have found them a room, chucked someone out of their room. I don't remember seeing them for a while...

... No, you don't think they could still be there! No, surely not!

Okay, so it's delaying tactics while I can send someone down to the stable to find out if they're still there. I hope not, how embarrassing that would be. They have come to visit a king, and I have put them in the stable! If I had known you gentlemen were coming, I would have checked the stable months ago, but you know, other things get in the way and it becomes one of those jobs you'll always get around to doing at some time or other.

Phew, they've seen that the star has stopped over a house down the road. Thank goodness for that! I wonder if it's the same couple that stayed here? I'll tell you something though, the next time the King of the Jews decides to come...

I'm going to be ready."

Newsletter and greetings
From Steve and Johanna Pillinger
(whose work we support as a Church)

**Wycliffe
Bible
Translators**

THANK YOU for all your friendship, support and prayers over this past year. We look forward to hearing from you, too, about the ups and downs you've experienced in 2025. We ourselves are deeply grateful for the Lord's presence, guidance and protection throughout this past year. And for the privilege of continuing to be involved with the work of Bible translation.

Steve has finished typesetting the Shango New Testament (Zambia). It is being published by the Seed Company (a Wycliffe affiliate organisation), who are planning to have it printed in Africa, rather than by the Korean printers Wycliffe usually deals with. Steve will hear in the new year about any final preparations needed before sending it for printing. A new typesetting project is under discussion for next year in an Ethiopian language. If Steve takes this on, it will be his first in a completely different writing system—the Ethiopic script.

We have recovered from our “adventures” with Jesse; he continues to be kept in custody until his trial. No date has been set. Meanwhile Johanna has worked hard, with the help of a local carpenter/painter, to get the cottage refurbished in time for Stephen and Mel.

The Lord bless you and your families abundantly this Christmas, and keep and encourage you throughout the New Year!

In His love,

— **Steve and Johanna.**

Pathways

As we begin a New Year it's always good to look afresh at our direction in life and do we feel we are on the right pathway in our walk with the Lord and in our work for Him.

We are all uniquely created by God, we are all different and walk our own unique pathway. We have diverse gifts all used to build up the Body of Christ. We are diverse and in spiritual growth it isn't a "one size fits all" so we need to be conscious of the steps along the pathway people are on and if led join with them and walk together into spiritual maturity. One pathway can come easily to us but there are some that require a lot of stretching for us to pursue.



Looking at how unique we are we ask the question: Are you an introvert or an extrovert or a bit in between? **How is your walk with God?** A spiritual pathway has to do with the way we most naturally sense God's presence and experience His growth. Are you:

Intellectual – do you love studying Scripture?

Relational – do you love learning in small groups?

Serving – do you love to serve others and look for meaningful opportunities?

Worship – do you have you a natural gift for expression and celebration in worship and leading others into the reality of God’s presence?

Are you an activist – very energetic and action led and **challenged**.

Contemplative – need peace and quiet, regular time alone to reflect.

Creation led – experiencing an ability to connect with God through nature.

We need to understand our own pathway and the unique way our God created us. I love the expression from Isaiah 30 v 21 which says: “Whether you turn to the right or to the left your ears will a voice behind you saying “This is the way, walk in it”. We need to listen for divine direction to stay on the right path.

Jesus was the embodiment of all the giftings we have; He embraced all we offer to build up His body here on earth. The Church needs diversity, if we are all the same the song of the triumphant church would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note! So happy New Year and let’s embrace our divine journey and the new exciting pathways God may lead us into!

Brenda Sheppard

The Hive

The Southminster Community Hub known as The Hive is located in the URC Church building in North Street and has become a resource centre to serve the needs of the Dengie Peninsula. A lot of renovation work in the church has taken place and is ongoing with funding being sought for the upkeep of the outside gardens. The management committee is a partnership between the United Reformed Church and St. Leonard's and they meet monthly to update progress.

At present some of the ongoing projects that are happening are:

Dengie Food Bank – Wednesdays 9am-12 noon

Lulu's Café – Fridays 11am—2pm

Mid Essex Recovery College – ongoing free courses
to help with mental well being

Cooking on a Budget – ongoing free courses

Art Classes run by MOAT

MIND Welcome Café to which people are referred
starts in January

Social Supermarket

Details of the courses and how to book are on the notice board outside the URC Church and at the back of the Church in St. Leonard's.

Prayer Ministry on Sundays after the 11am service

Please come to the area outside the Chapel if you have a particular need for prayer, (for yourself or someone close to you) where there should be two people available to pray with you. Pre-service prayer occurs too, so feel free to join them with your supporting prayers or your urgent requests.

Obviously church members will be available to pray with you at other times too, so do ask if necessary.

OUR CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL was held in church on Saturday 13th December from 2pm until 4pm.

Various community groups displayed their skills—not only in decorating the trees beautifully, but also explaining what their normal purposes in Southminster involve.

To cater particularly for the many children present, Father Christmas was available for a chat in the chapel. The children really appreciated this—as did their adult relatives.

Our music group provided background music in long sessions during the day and some visitors joined in the singing wherever they were in the building.

The refreshments were enjoyed too, so we thank the team who served during the day.

Conversations were appreciated, especially as many of the people present didn't have such opportunities regularly

The trees will remain available until New Year's Day so come and see them if you are able. Then please pray for the people who will have to do all the clearing up afterwards!

Kath Dunstan

Sunday 4th January

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/President/Preacher

Ephesians 3 : 1 - 12

Matthew 2 : 1 - 12

Sidesperson

2nd Sunday of Christmas

Rev'd Peter / Brenda Sheppard

Celebrant

Celebrant

Gordon Baker

11.00 Family Holy Communion

President/Preacher

Readings as above

Intercessions

Prayer Ministry

Audio-visuals

Sidesperson

Refreshments

Rev'd Peter / Brenda Sheppard

Gwyneth Iffland

Frances Hatfield

Fiona Begley & Kathy Carnell

Christine Morgan

Gwyneth Iffland

Christine Lucas & Sandra Bradford

Sunday 11th January

Baptism of Christ

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/President/Preacher

Acts 10 : 34 – 43

Matthew 3 : 13 - end

Sidesperson

Rev'd Ken Dunstan

Celebrant

Celebrant

Leon Flack

11.00 Family Celebration

Leaders

Prayer Ministry

Audio-visuals

Sidesperson

Refreshments

Team: Karen, Jenny, Dawn

Jenni Blomfield & Sarah Prendergast

Christine Lucas

Brenda Sheppard

Sally Culff & Maureen Smith

Sunday 18th January

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/President/Preacher

I Corinthians 1 : 1 - 9

John 1 : 29 - 42

Sidesperson

2nd Sunday of Epiphany

Rev'd Peter/ Norman Pratt

Celebrant

Celebrant

Paul Lucas

11.00 Morning Worship (HACKBLOCK SERVICE)

Leader

Readings

Intercessions

Audio-visuals

Prayer ministry

Sidesperson

Refreshments

Jenny Pratt / Norman Pratt

Kath Dunstan

Brenda Sheppard

Christine Morgan

Christine Lucas & Sylvia Adams

Paul Lucas

Dee Byford & Jenni Blomfield

Sunday 25th January

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/Preacher

I Corinthians 1 : 10 - 18

Matthew 4 : 12 - 23

Sidesperson

3rd Sunday of Epiphany

Rev'd Peter / Jenny Pratt

Celebrant

Celebrant

Keith Hatfield

10.15 Café Church

Leader/Preacher

Readings as above

Intercessions

Prayer Ministry

Audio-visuals

Sidesperson

Refreshments

Morning worship

Rev'd Peter / Jenny Pratt

Pauline Siggers

Fiona Begley

Frances Hatfield & Yvonne Thurbon

Sylvia Adams

Gordon Baker

Sarah Prendergast & Ray Kempen

Steeple Church News

Steeple Church has services every Sunday morning at 9.15am unless otherwise advertised

We have Morning Prayer on the first Sunday each month, a Family Service on third Sunday and Holy Communion on the second and fourth Sundays.

An on-line service for those preferring to worship from home is available each week on www.stleonardsouthminster.org.uk



Steeple Church contacts:

Rev'd Canon Peter Begley, Vicar, 01621 772 300

Fiona Ashworth, Churchwarden,

Rhona Leech, Assistant Churchwarden

& PCC Secretary

Teresa Julien, Assistant Warden,

Peter Marshall, PCC Treasurer & Verger

Steeple's January Services in brief

(Service titles and leaders only)

4th 09.15 Rev'd Peter & Brenda Sheppard

11th 09.15 Holy Communion

For PLOUGH SUNDAY Rev'd Ken Dunstan

18th 09.15 Family Service Jenny Pratt & Norman Pratt

25th 09.15 Rev'd Peter & Jenny Pratt

**The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani,
the Bishop of Chelmsford,
has written a New Year message for 2026**

It was a joy to meet Pope Leo in Rome in November of last year. The occasion was the declaration of Cardinal Newman as a Doctor of The Church, made all the more meaningful in the Jubilee Year, themed “Pilgrims of Hope”. It seems to me that as we stand on the threshold of a New Year, we are called to travel this path of Hope together.

It’s always a temptation to be drawn towards despair. A febrile political environment, the diminished standing of the Church, even our own weariness can lead us to forget that we are called to be people of Hope.

Those whose Hope is in the Word made Flesh—the message that’s been proclaimed in churches throughout our Diocese this Christmas period and because of which we can journey confidently into a new year.

POSSIBLE ROTA DETAILS: YOUR AVAILABILITY FOR 2 MONTHS

We can worship regularly in church again, but with appropriate safety limitations, so we need to be well-prepared. Please let Paul Lucas know if you are willing to be part of his volunteer team but cannot be available on any of the following dates.

February 2026	1	8	15	22	
March 2026	1	8	15	22	29

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO FULFIL YOUR DUTY YOU SHOULD CHANGE WITH SOMEONE AND INFORM THE WARDENS OF THE ARRANGEMENT.

SATURDAY CLUB

for Primary School children

Saturday morning (monthly) in church

9.30 am - 11.30 am £1 per child

Children can join in craft, music, games etc.
or just spend time chatting with their friends.

As usual, the day after Saturday Club is our
Family Celebration in the church at 11 am.

On Sunday 11th January at 11 am we shall have our normal annual **Hackblock Service**. in memory of the father and son John and Peter Hackblock who were Southminster's doctors in the late 18th century. The Hackblock Educational Trust was set up in 1991 and it serves the needs of local young people. More information will be available at the service and we shall learn how our local school has benefitted. Do pray and come to the service if you are able.

Who are we?

We are part of God's Family --- the Church.

Everyone is invited to be part of this family.

To keep aware of what is happening, and to participate on line with services, log into the website

<https://www.stleonardsouthminster.org.uk/>

Also, we have a WhatsApp group entitled

"Together Apart Our Church". Lots of people are involved in this.

These links have been greatly appreciated by regular Church family members and also by people who have not, to date, attended our church services. It is good to 'allow' God to point us in possible new directions and then to respond.

God has a plan with hope for future.

If you would like specific prayer, please contact the vicar. preferably by email but otherwise on 01621 772300

A notice about our offerings to God.

Many of us use the facility of the offering plate to give our gifts to God. Whether we are attending in person, or not, it is always a good time to think about a standing order to the church so that we are still bringing our gift. Many of us are doing this already – Thank you, but those who may be wondering how they can continue their giving through Standing Order the details of the church bank are here:

Barclays Bank

Sort code: **20.54.30**

A/c No. **80825107**

A/c Name: Southminster Parochial Church Council.

For Steeple use: Sort code: **20.54.30**

A/c No. **60842494**

A/c Name: Steeple Parochial Church Council.

Henry Church Cleaning Club 2026



The cleaning continues on in the Church and we are blessed to be part of a really faithful team but there is always plenty of room for new recruits as some of us are slowing down a bit!! We meet fortnightly on a Friday morning from 9am to 11am. If you could spare just a little time during those 2 hours or even if you could come monthly it would be a great help.

January dates are: Sat. 3rd and Fri. 16th & 30th

If you would like to give it a try and would like a rota please speak to me, Brenda Sheppard, or contact me by phone or on email.

You will be made very welcome especially on 3rd January when the Christmas trees will have been removed.

**Let us all continue to pray to our loving Father
in these very difficult times.**

For the National Church - particularly following the
Appointment of Archbishop of Canterbury,
The Most Rev'd & Rt Hon. Dame Sarah Mullally DBE

For family members - near and far - and neighbours

For people suffering loneliness, illness and/or bereavement

For people making decisions about treatment

For hospital staff, carers, front-line workers including teachers

For local farmers and all their workers in winter months

For people suffering financially because of unemployment....

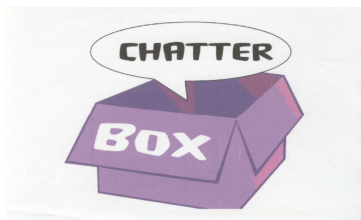
And let us remember "Father, your will be done."

We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

SOUTHMINSTER MEMORIAL HALL

LUNCH CLUB meets on most Mondays.
If you would like any information please phone
Dave Christie 07775 758118.

Fancy a chat?



At the Memorial Hall
10.00 - 12.00 Thursday mornings

As well as chatting there's tea, coffee, biscuits (and sometimes cake) jigsaws, crafts, newspapers, board games - and chatting isn't compulsory!

DENGIE HUNDRED LADIES GROUP

Tuesday January 26th

Doreen Levy : Quizzes

For further details contact Paula Neall 01621 773243



LITTLE LIONS' usually meet on Wednesday mornings in the Memorial Hall but this is **during term-time only**. It is for babies, toddlers & their carers. The families join the main services, especially the Family Celebrations every second Sunday.

IF you are having a difficult time at the moment,
this poem may help you to cope and hope.

A poem written by a friend, Joy Tobler

BUDDLEIA

They were all straggly and stunted
from pushing up through the tarmac and concrete
of the island separating the two streams of traffic.

How had they come to this hostile wilderness?
What inner force made them seek light
above the dark hardness?

Yet little clump after little clump
not only shot through the barrier
but were now blooming beautifully.

The Butterfly Bush; but neither bushy
nor attracting butterflies as the cars rushed by.

A beautiful anomaly which cheered my soul.
A challenge to bloom however hard my circumstances.

PRAY FOR SOUTHMINSTER:

w/b	4 January	North- East
w/b	11 January	Central - North-West
w/b	18 January	Central - East
w/b	25 January	Central - South





WHO ARE WE? Mission Statement



“To be a people offering praise and worship to God and serving him by being the Good News by our words and actions”

Web Site www.stleonardsouthminster.org.uk

Contact: vicar@stleonardsouthminster.org.uk

Telephone 01621 772300

If you wish to contact the Church regarding a Safeguarding issue
please contact us by telephone on 07745 688845
or via safeguarding@stleonardsouthminster.org.uk

See pages 10-11 for details during this season.

**Weekly notices, covering any changes, will be available to read
on the outside church notice-board.**

SUNDAY SERVICES

8:00 am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer 1662)

11.00 am Holy Communion or Morning Worship

10.15 am (approx.) Café Church begins on 4th Sundays

Steeple Services similarly continue at **9.15am**

Children and Young people are always welcomed
especially for the **Family Celebration Services.**

WEEKDAY SERVICES:

Monday. Wednesday & Friday at 8 am Morning Prayer

Tuesday at 8.30 am Just Prayer

‘LITTLE LIONS’ usually meet on Wednesday mornings

In the Memorial Hall but this is **during term-time only.**

It is for babies/toddlers & their carers.



BIBLE STUDY GROUPS meet in the church on
Mondays (10 am) and Thursdays (8 pm)

Details of the actual programme are available in church
and on the notice boards.