

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

StL



and also for Steeple Parish
**The Church of
St Lawrence & All Saints**



The traditional birthplace of Jesus, in Bethlehem.

DECEMBER 2024

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
2 Corinthians 9 verse 15

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

*Articles for the January magazine
should be with
Kath Dunstan by, at the latest,
Sunday 15th December
New contributors are welcome.*

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!)

A December Reflection by Rev'd Peter

Advent

I wonder what it is that you are looking forward to this Christmas? Perhaps it is wrapping presents for others and the anticipated excitement of the recipient as they open the parcel. Perhaps it is meeting with others around a dinner table and having time to enjoy each other's company rather than a quick snack and on to the next 'job'. It may be that you are looking forward to Boxing Day when the rush is over and having the time to talk or play games.... Or simply snooze. As we sit to enjoy a movie over Christmas, we shall be bombarded with adverts for summer holidays, sunny beaches and blue seas and we may be tempted to look forward to plan a summer holiday. The hopes and dreams of planning ahead can make some winter evenings a more pleasant experience.

Alternatively, we may find joy in sharing memories of Christmas past; of loved ones and also some of the hilarious situations or incidents that we are reminded of at this time of the year.

It is important to hold all of these in balance: too much 'past' may sadden us because of how things 'used to be'. Too much 'future' and we have planned our life away – however, there are things that we need to plan very carefully for our future and for our families; specifically, though, for our future.

God has made a plan, a plan to establish a brighter future for us all, a plan that needs to be carefully put together and worked through; a plan that will give to us all hope, and vision, and peace in our hearts. The plan took many hundreds of years for the right moment for Jesus to come. A plan that

was considered by the Trinity of God in agreement between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This plan was not put together for God and His future, but for our future, your future, my future; so that God could enjoy our presence around the table with Him and fellowship with us once again. God's plan was eagerly anticipated by the heavenly host – they all knew what was about to happen. As Jesus is born in the stable so the heavenly host shout and sing and burst with the excitement of God's gift to us – Jesus unwrapped, given to everyone, and we share in the joy of the Father as Jesus takes His place in the world – God incarnate.

As you wrap some gifts, order the food and drink, put up the decorations and make plans for a perfect day, think on the plans that God made – the plans that He took His time in perfecting – the plans that would pay the ransom needed to free us, the plans that neutralised the power of the enemy over us. The perfect plan.... with the perfect gift.... on a perfect day.

We welcome once again the story of Jesus and how He came to us to give to us that gift of freedom from guilt and shame: a gift of love from the Father, the gift of belonging to a family, the gift of life!

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

[2 Corinthians 9:15](#)

May you have a blessed Christmas
and a joyful New Year!

Peter

Southminster Community Hub Update



The Management Committee of representatives of the United Reformed Church and St. Leonard's Church, who are working in partnership, meet monthly in the URC Church Building to discuss and update on the expansion of the use of the building for a Community Hub to become a resource centre to serve the needs of the Dengie Peninsula.

A Community development worker has now been appointed to help the project develop and it is good to have Karis Galliano on board with her wealth of experience and local connections.

Work goes on in setting up the policies and procedures for the legal aspects needed to be covered for the Hub and funding/grant sources discussed.

We recognise that Citizens Advice on a Tuesday and the Food Pantry on a Wednesday have been regularly coming to the URC Church and it is hoped in the future to have more organisations come in. We had an update on the numbers of people being referred and benefitting from the Food Pantry which is now 100+ (this figure incorporates families). The Food Pantry is helped so much by some local food outlets for which they are very grateful.

The renovations and costings for the hub are ongoing and it is hoped that the work will start in earnest by next March.

Re-Gifting

Be honest, have you ever re-gifted an unwanted present given to you? It's almost Christmas and it's often a struggle to know what to buy as a gift for someone isn't it, but should it be a struggle? Do we want to stop buying gifts but don't know how to approach the subject and worry that we'll look mean?

Often, we give monetary gifts so the recipient chooses their own gift, but how much do we give as things get more expensive year after year? How often do we receive a gift we don't like or need? Do we re-gift it and hope the giver doesn't find out or we accidentally give them back their gift to us? Does Christmas a time of joy and celebration, get spoiled by not receiving the gift you longed for?



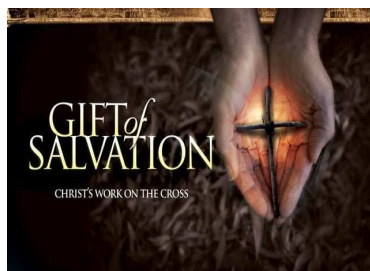
It is said that our gift giving goes back to the time when the Wise Men took gifts to the Christ Child, gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, all gifts with a special meaning. Gold being symbolic of Christ the King, His kingship on earth; Frankincense was used for worship in the temple, symbolic of Christ the High Priest; Myrrh, was an anointing perfume for someone who had died, symbolic of the death of Jesus for the sake of truth. The wise men gave gifts with such meaning, thoughtful gifts, gifts lovingly received.

Or perhaps was gift giving a pagan custom? Also, where did Father Christmas (or Santa Claus) originate from? It was believed that Saint Nicholas, was a Christian Bishop who helped the needy and the legend of his gift giving ministry

grew. It is said that he transformed into the legendary character called Santa Claus.

One thing we do know is that the most precious gift any person can receive is the gift we read of in Acts 2: 38 – 39 which says: “Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. The Holy Spirit in turn brings gifts to help us lead others to Jesus. We think especially of the gift of love which we receive for ourselves, the gift that keeps on coming and overflows in us, so we can in turn re-gift it

Let's remember this Christmas that Jesus is the reason for the Season and accept His wonderful gift of salvation and the promise of eternal life with Him. What better gift can we ask for.



Brenda Sheppard

And think about the gift of our environment :

Find ways to make your Christmas festivities both a joyous celebration of Christ ' s coming and environmentally conscious. Explore A Rocha UK ' s twelve tips for a greener Christmas at arocha.org.uk/our-twelve-tips-for-a-greener-christmas

Steeple Church News

Steeple Church has services every Sunday morning at 9.15am unless otherwise advertised on the church door. 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's first event of the Advent season will be our "Christingle & Carols" service at 4pm on Sunday 8th December.

Instead of making Christingles in advance, we set out all the necessary materials on the table in the middle of the church where the children usually sit. When the children (and some of the adults) have made their own Christingle we turn out the lights and everyone processes up the aisle to the Chancel with their lighted candles - a truly magical scene.

Christmas celebrations will begin with a Carol Service at 4pm on 22nd.

There will be no services at Steeple on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day but many of us will join some of the services at St Leonard's, which are: On Christmas Eve, a 'Midnight' Holy Communion starting at 11.30pm
On Christmas Day, an early Holy Communion at 9am, followed by a Family Celebration at 10am.

There will be no 9.15 services at Steeple on Sunday 8th or Sunday 22nd.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Steeple Church contacts:

Rev'd Canon Peter Begley, Vicar, 01621 772 300
Rhona Leech, Churchwarden and PCC Secretary,
Teresa Julien, Assistant Churchwarden,
Fiona Ashworth, Assistant Churchwarden,
Peter Marshall, PCC Treasurer and Verger,

THANK YOU FOR THE SINGING

On Saturday 16th November at 5pm

We, at St Leonard's, welcomed

THE EVERY VOICE CHOIR

who presented a wonderful concert in church
for a great number of people to enjoy.

The choir includes several people who used to be
members of the Southminster Choir (SOCS) which
is, sadly, now non-existent.

The Choir generously enabled the Church to
receive £440 for attendance money.

We were pleased to welcome so many people to the
Remembrance Sunday service and our uniformed
organisations and other special guests.

We were able to donate to **Royal British Legion** the
collection from this service, amounting to **£450**.

Thank you everyone for your^ogenerous contributions.

Sunday 1st December

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/President/Preacher
I Thessalonians 3 : 9 - end
Luke 21: 25 - 36
Sidesperson

Advent Sunday

Rev'd Peter/Norman Pratt
Celebrant
Celebrant
Gordon Baker

11.00 Holy Communion

President/Preacher
Readings as above
Intercessions
Prayer Ministry
Audio-visuals
Sidesperson
Refreshments

Rev'd Peter/Norman Pratt
Christine Lucas
Brenda Sheppard
Christine Lucas & Yvonne Thurbon
Christine Morgan
Paul Lucas
Kathy Carnell & Frances Hatfield

15.30 Christingle Service followed by Turning on Lights

Wednesday 4th December

18.30 for 19.00 Light up a Life Service

Sunday 8th December

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/President/Preacher
Philippians 1 : 3 - 11
Luke 3 : 1 - 6
Sidesperson

2nd Sunday of Advent

Rev'd Ken Dunstan
Celebrant
Celebrant
Paul Lucas

11.00 Family Celebration

Leaders
Prayer Ministry
Audio-visuals
Sidesperson
Refreshments

Team: Karen, Jenny, Dawn
Sarah Prendergast & Frances Hatfield
Christine Lucas
Kathy Carnell
Sally Culff & Maureen Smith

Sunday 15th December
08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/Preacher
Philippians 4 : 4 - 7
Luke 3 : 7 - 18
Sidesperson

3rd Sunday of Advent

Rev'd Peter/ Jenny Pratt
Celebrant
Celebrant
Leon Flack

NO 11 am SERVICE TODAY

17.00 Community Service of Lessons & Carols

Leader/Preacher	Rev'd Peter
Readings and Readers	to be arranged
Audio-Visuals	Christine Morgan
Sidesperson	Brenda Sheppard
Refreshments	Social Committee

Sunday 22nd December
08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/Preacher
Hebrews 10 : 5 - 10
Luke 1 : 39 - 45
Sidesperson

4th Sunday of Advent

Rev'd Peter/Brenda Sheppard
Celebrant
Celebrant
Keith Hatfield

11.00 Morning Worship

Leader/Preacher
Readings as above
Intercessions
Prayer Ministry
Audio-Visuals
Sidesperson
Refreshments

Rev'd Peter/Brenda Sheppard
Linda Payne
Frances Hatfield
Keith Hatfield & Fiona Begley
Sylvia Adams
Kath Dunstan
Jenni Blomfield & Dee Byford

Tuesday 24th December**Christmas Eve****16.00 Crib Service**

Leader

Karen Flack

Sidesperson

23.30 'Midnight' Holy Communion

Leader/Preacher

Rev'd Peter

Readings

Fiona Begley

Sidesperson

Gordon Baker & another

Wednesday 25th December**Christmas Day****09.00 Holy Communion BCP**

Leader/Preacher

Rev'd Peter/Jenny Pratt

Hebrews 1: 1-12 & John 1:1-14

Celebrant

Sidesperson

t.b.a.

10.00 All Age Family Service

Leader/Preacher

Rev'd Peter/Jenny Pratt

Readings as above

t.b.a.

Intercessions

t.b.a.

Sidesperson

Kathy Carnell

Sunday 29th December**1st Sunday of Christmas****08.00 Holy Communion BCP**

Leader/Preacher

Rev'd Ken/Norman Pratt

Colossians 3: 12-17 & Luke 2 : 41 - end

Celebrant

Sidesperson

Leon Flack

11.00 United Morning Worship

Leader/Preacher

Jenny Pratt/Norman Pratt

Readings as above

Kath Dunstan

Intercessions

Rupert Killick

Audio-Visuals

Christine Morgan

Sidesperson

Gwyneth Iffland

Refreshments

t.b.a.

The ALPHA COURSE

Explore the meaning of life!

Alpha for the New Year

The new course will continue on Thursday evenings at the Vicarage, but not until January 2025, following consultation with the original people who supported and attended it.

The evening starts with a meal together followed by a short talk and discussion in a small group.

No experience necessary; come as you are and get to know others while learning about the Christian faith.

The evening starts at 6.30 pm

There is a new sign-up sheet at the back of the church.

Quiz night report 2024

Quiz night was enjoyed by about 40 people making up 5 tables. There were 7 categories including a 'Connections' round. The marathon was to identify the plants from cryptic pictures.

Prizes were awarded to the winners and the losers received a wooden spoon. The fish and chip supper was delicious. And of course, the jokes were amazing ... oh yes they were! Thanks to all those who helped with the running of it and I look forward to seeing you next year xx

Jenny Pratt



Henry Church Cleaning Club 2024

The cleaning continues on in the Church! We are blessed to be part of a really faithful team but there is always plenty of room for new recruits. We have also been blessed by the addition of two new members who are a great asset and do a great job as do the faithful members who have been cleaning for many years. We meet fortnightly on a Friday morning from 9am to 11am. If you could spare just a little time during those 2 hours and would like a rota please speak to me, Brenda Sheppard, or contact me on. You will be made very welcome.



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.

2024 last date: 7th Dec.

The day after every Saturday Club is our Family Celebration in the church at 11 am where there will be an opportunity for the children to share anything they have created at the club.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

138 boxes were delivered to the Distribution Depot

Thank you everyone who filled these boxes.

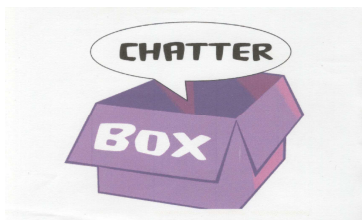
Thank you, also, for the gifts of toiletries and toys for the Refuge. A good amount has been delivered.



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!



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. Monthly Saturday Club has started.

DENGIE HUNDRED LADIES GROUP

Tuesday 17th December

Party Terry Duffy

Competition : Hand-made Christmas card

For further details contact Paula Neall 01621 773243

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.

January 2025	5	12	19	26
February 2025	2	9	16	23

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

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

For the National Church - particularly following the
resignation of Archbishop Justin Welby

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."

Another local event on **Friday 13th December at 7 pm**

St Lawrence Singers : CHRISTMAS CONCERT

at St Lawrence Newlands Barn CM0 7LL

Tickets £10 Refreshments included

Contact 01621 779630 / 07717 072784

Profits to St Lawrence Church & Essex Home Start

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 Parochial¹⁷ Church Council.

Don't Forget
The annual Christmas Tree Festival
at St Leonard's church
On Saturday 14th December
From 2pm until 4 pm.

The trees should arrive on 9th December
and will be decorated by sponsors on 11th December.

It should be an enjoyable afternoon for adults
and children (even seeing Santa!)

We are grateful for all the hard work that is put in to
make this successful, and we hope to see you here.

Local Event coming up

Come and join members of
"The Remedy" Band and guests
for **"Carols on the Green"**

Friday 20th December from 6pm
(for approx. one hour)



On the Square outside St Nicholas Church, Tillingham.

Join in to heartily sing along heralding in the Christmas Season
And enjoy some festive refreshments.

PRAY FOR SOUTHMINSTER:

w/b	1 December	Central - South
w/b	8 December	South - West
w/b	15 December	Central - West
w/b	22 December	North - East
w/b	29 December	Central - North- West





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

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 usually meet in the
church on Mondays (10am) and Thursdays (8pm)

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