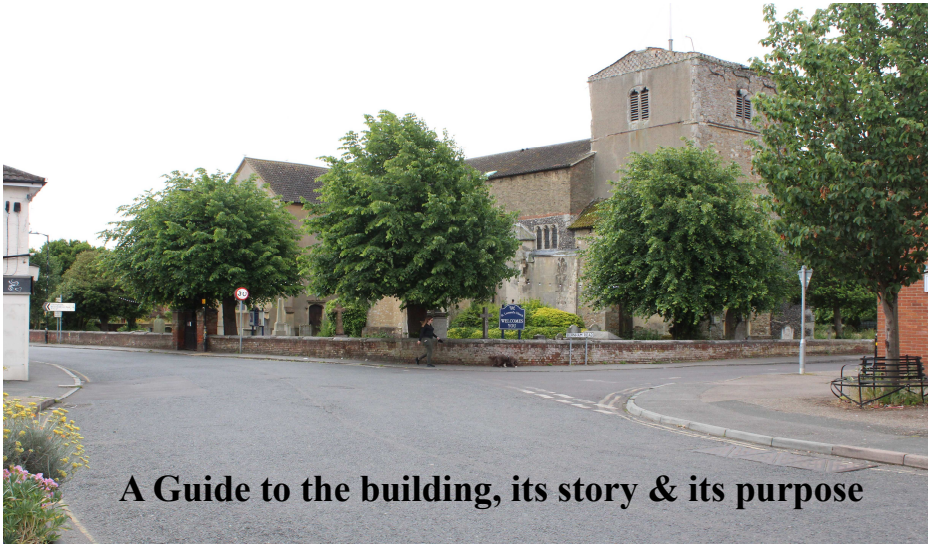


The CHURCH of ST. LEONARD SOUTHMINSTER

Welcome to the Parish Church building.



A Guide to the building, its story & its purpose

The porch and North doorway through which you entered are about 500 years old (around 1520). The main part of the building is up to 400 years older. The porch ceiling is held up by "tierceron" vaulting. This means that each of the four lines has an extra pair of decorative ribs from its middle to the wall. It is



almost unique in Essex. At the centre is a boss portraying God as "a Trinity of persons." God the Father sits with the Son before him. The Holy Spirit (as a Dove) flies above him.



Above the porch is a room reached through the small door and steep spiral stairs to the west of the main entrance. The original door of overlapping battens with strap hinges is still in place.

The doorway and stairs are the same age as the porch. It is thought that, over 400 years ago, monks may have used this room as a place in which to instruct the local children. Possibly it was a shelter for visiting monks.

The monks probably came from the Priory of St. Osyth, near Clacton. The original Southminster Church had been owned by the Priory since about 1120. The Prior had the right to the tithes of the parish and to appoint the parish priest. The Prior was the Rector ("Ruler") and he appointed a Vicar ("Deputy") to care for the church and people. This remained the case for about 400 years, until Henry VIII dissolved the Priory of St. Osyth in 1540. The first recorded Vicar of Southminster was Thomas le Brett in 1333. There is a list on the South Wall opposite the main door.

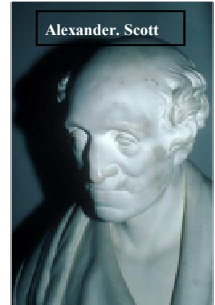
The Vicars of the Parish of St. Leonard, Southminster, in the County of Essex.

Thomas le Brett	1333	Thomas Mayne	1611
Richard de Widdow	1334	John Bower	1612
Thomas de Melton	1335	William Ambrose	1613
Robert Pacion	1336	Andrew Mayne	1614
John Stanford	1337	Thomas Mayne	1615
Stephen le Rye	1338	John Mayne	1616
Thomas Mayne	1339	William Mayne	1617
Henry de Rye	1340	William Mayne	1618
John Mayne	1341	Thomas Mayne	1619
Richard de Rye	1342	John Mayne	1620
Thomas Mayne	1343	William Mayne	1621
Robert Mayne	1344	Thomas Mayne	1622
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John Mayne	1533	John Mayne	1811

The large 'partner' table and bureau bookcase, at the back of the church, are two of the so-called 'Nelson Relics', though the table has been dated to around 1820, later than Nelson. It would have been used in an office, where clerks worked in pairs opposite each other. Contrary to legend, it was never on HMS Victory. (We asked!)

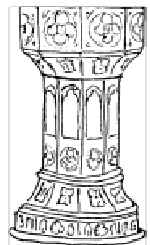
The "Book case" has two parts and may have been separate items in a country house. The bottom item is a "chest commode." The left-hand drawer is "upside down" with a top but no bottom. Holes in the top once held a bowl and two glasses. We imagine that residents or guests would have had hot water delivered and used the bowl for face-washing.

The others are a gilt-framed mirror and a cast iron box fireplace which are in the vestry and not on view. The history of these articles is rather vague, but they seem to have arrived in the church during the incumbency of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Scott, Vicar from 1803-1840. This energetic clergyman was Secretary to Admiral Nelson for many campaigns. At the Battle of Trafalgar, 21st October 1805. Nelson died in Scott's arms. A picture, "Death of Nelson", is mounted on the North wall. The original by Daniel Maclise is a wall painting in the Royal Gallery of the Palace of Westminster. Our engraved copy, published in 1876, is by Charles Sharpe.



The door at the West end of the nave leads to the bottom of the bell tower. The ground floor ringing chamber has been converted into a kitchen and toilets. The ringing chamber is a new floor above the toilets and kitchen and dates from the late 1980s. This has shortened the ropes and made the eight bells easier to ring.

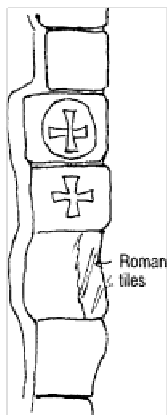
On the South side of the nave is the large stone font, about 550 years old. The carved wooden cover is 19th century. The traditional position of the font is next to the church door. This reminds us that just as the door is the way into the church building, baptism is the way into the Church, the global people of God. Baptism is both a ceremonial washing away of sinfulness and a ceremonial drowning as the new Christian begins a new life. This font was used regularly until 2004, when its pillar became unsafe. Consequently it has been moved to a safe place and a modern portable font is used for infant baptisms.



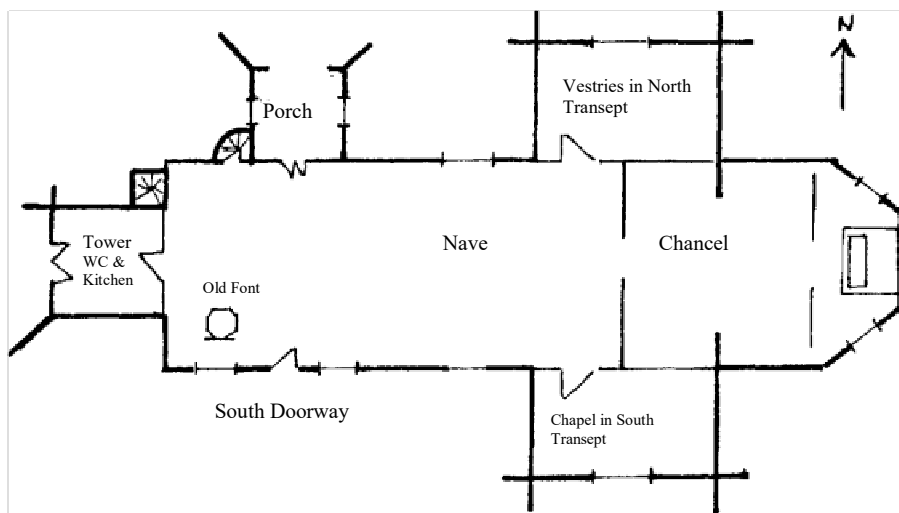
15th Century Font

The round-headed Norman South doorway is one of the oldest parts of the building. As it dates from the early 12th century this means that nearly 900 years ago the people of Southminster were coming this way into their church to

join in worship and to pray. There has been a long, long history of prayer and worship in this building. On the left jamb of this doorway are two consecration crosses. The One probably dates from the time of the doorway, while the other marks the time in the 16th century when John Vyntoner, Prior of St. Osyth, made many alterations to the Norman building and enlarged it. Especially, he raised the roof and installed the clerestory windows.



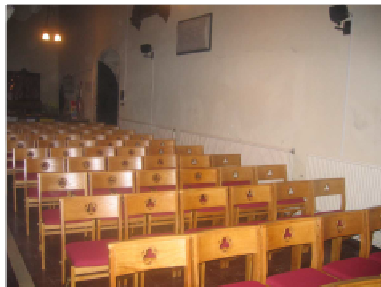
Also incorporated into the stonework are some Roman tiles. As there is no building stone in this part of Essex the first builders of this church had to make use of whatever materials came to hand. This is why the exterior of the church is such an odd collection of materials. This will be described on the guide to the outside.



The interior of the church was decorated during 1996 as a self-help project by the congregation. We had valuable assistance from Bradwell Power Station who loaned scaffolding and their skilled riggers during the period. Sunday services continued as normal throughout the

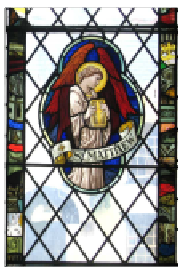
decoration, although no weddings were arranged. A photograph album recording the project is at the back of the church.

In 2004 the church invested in good quality, comfortable and appropriate chairs in the nave instead of the late 19th century, uncomfortable, fixed pews. The flexibility that this provided has enabled a more imaginative use of the building.



As you walk towards the East end of the church you will see on your right a framed record of all those from Southminster who served in the forces in the 1914-18 War. The names of those who died are inscribed in red. Above this is the mount containing the laid-up Standard of the Southminster branch of the Royal British Legion.

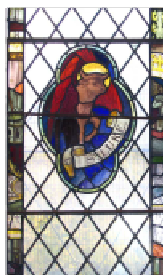
The two partially stained glass windows on opposite sides of the nave contain in their borders fragments of the original 19th century glass from the East windows. These windows were destroyed when the church was damaged by a German bomb in 1940. The four motifs symbolise the emphases of the four gospel writers: St. Matthew, a man; St. Mark, a lion; St. Luke, an ox; and St. John, an eagle.



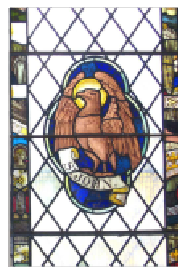
The 'Divine Man' of St Matthew reminds us that his Gospel teaches us about the human nature of Christ.



The winged lion of St. Mark refers to Jesus' activity in fighting the powers of evil as the unconquered king.



The ox of St Luke portrays Jesus both as most powerful and as the carrier of all people's burdens.

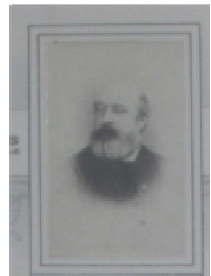


The Eagle of St John refers to his teaching that Jesus is God's Word made human.

All the window symbols are to be found in the Book of Revelation Chapter 4 verse 7.

As you stand level with the front seats you are at the point where the church was greatly enlarged starting in 1808 by Alexander Scott. This is commemorated on the large wooden board on the North nave wall. By 1819 the work was completed. The roof had been further raised, and the transepts, chancel and sanctuary built. The simple church was now cross-shaped. However, the interior was not as you see it now. The floor from this point Eastwards was all on one level and there were no dividing wooden screens or choir pews. A drawing in the choir vestry shows this.

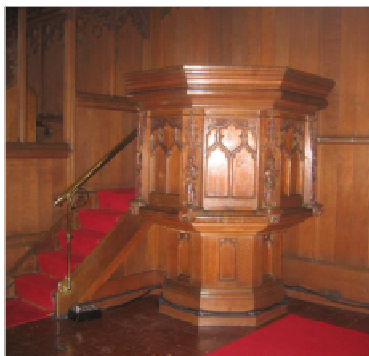
The Rev. William Henry Lowder, Vicar from 1891-1901, was responsible for the present arrangement. He is commemorated by a marble plaque on the North wall of the nave. The screen and pulpit, and possibly some other parts of the carved woodwork, may be some of his own work, but we cannot be absolutely sure.



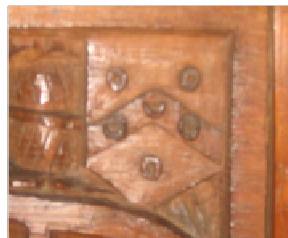
The East windows were shortened between 1891 and 1901 to incorporate a stone bench in the sanctuary representing mediaeval sedilia. *Sedilia*, (Latin for seats), were for the priest, deacon and subdeacon at particular parts of the Roman Mass. Our long bench goes on both sides of the altar; true sedilia are normally only on the South side. Lowder was an early “Anglo-Catholic.” He wanted the building to be “a palace meet for the presence of the King of Kings.” This led to his installing the steps leading to the raised Chancel and still higher to the Sanctuary. This replaced the flat Georgian Chancel used by Scott and his successor, George Berkeley. Lowder’s Screen was a further look back towards Mediaeval Cathedral design, where the screen separated the choir and Sanctuary from the congregation in the nave.

The pulpit features carvings of the four gospel writers with their symbols below them. From right to left: Matthew, Mark, Luke (his ox has lost its horns) and John. The carving also includes two coats of arms. On the right is the shield of the Patron of the parish, Thomas Sutton, founder of 'Christ's Hospital in Charterhouse' in London.

Thomas Sutton became Patron of Southminster in 1611. The Carthusian



Monastery, "The Charterhouse" which housed Sutton's

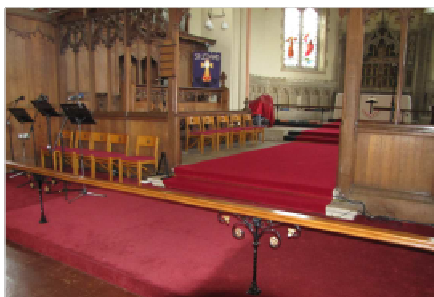


Arms of Thomas Sutton

Charity, was, like St Osyth's Priory, a casualty of Henry VIII's purge of the monasteries. The Carthusians suffered savage persecution and several of the monks were martyred. The shield

on the left of the pulpit is of the Diocese of St. Albans. Essex was part of the Diocese of St Albans until 1914.

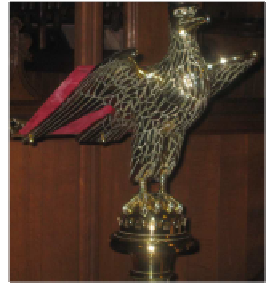
Near the pulpit is a wooden lectern and preaching desk with microphones, which was purchased with the chairs.



In early 2014 a low platform was added in front of the chancel step to enable a "nave altar" to be used. This follows the instruction in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer that the Holy Table should be close to the people. It also helps

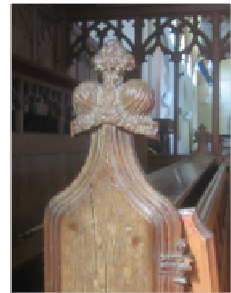
members of the congregation with mobility problems who were finding difficulty negotiating the several steps to the 19th Century High Altar for Holy Communion. A removable rail matches the Sanctuary rail.

A brass lectern is very common in Anglican churches. It is inspired by John the Evangelist, whose Gospel opens with the Word of God being “made flesh” in Jesus Christ. So the written Word in the Bible, proclaiming the living Word, Jesus, was read from it whenever the church came together. Our eagle, together with the other brass round the building, is regularly polished by the volunteers from the congregation who form the church cleaning team, known as the Henry Club, named after the cheerful vacuum cleaner used regularly.



The poppy-head pew ends at the East end of the front choir pews are much older than all the rest. They are thought to be 15th century - some 500 years old. The others are late 19th century copies. There is a misericord in the North clergy stall in the choir - a fold-down ledge which enabled the occupant to sit while appearing to stand.

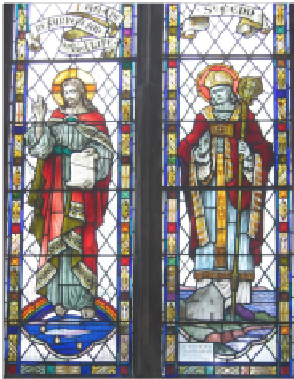
Misericord literally means “pity of the heart.” Mediaeval monasteries required long periods of standing for prayer. Not all monks were young enough or fit enough for this. The misericord eased their discomfort during the prayer.



The present East windows replace those destroyed by a bomb in 1940. The two inner windows depict, on the left, Christ in his earthly ministry as 'The Good Shepherd', and on the right as our risen and ascended Lord, 'the Resurrection and the Life'. The left hand outer window shows Leonard of Noblac, to whom the building is dedicated. He carries chains to show him as the patron saint of prisoners. He is celebrated on 6th November.

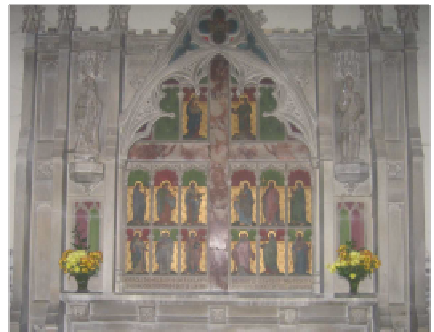


The right hand window is of the Celtic saint, Cedd, who founded the chapel of St. Peter-on-the-Wall, pictured next to his right foot. It was built in 654 on the site of a Roman fort at Bradwell-on-Sea. It is well worth a visit while you are in this area. After 1370 years it is still a place of pilgrimage, prayer and spiritual nourishment. On the first Saturday in July the Chapel hosts the inter-Church Bradwell Pilgrimage.



Cedd is alleged to have started a monastery in Southminster and that this gave the village its name. This is why the Chapel is on the window. On the other hand, a Minster, while it may have a monastic foundation, can also be the central, senior church of an area. In 1087 the Domesday Book showed Southminster as the biggest settlement in the Dengie Hundred, bigger than Maldon.

Behind the Altar is a reredos dedicated to Caroline, widow of George Berkeley, Vicar from 1840 to 1890. The Latin inscription says that she died in Easter Week 1897. The reredos is at the centre of a stone imitation sedilia of thirteen arcades with a marble shelf on the right. The reredos pictures the Virgin and Child, and St. Leonard (top centre) with the 12 Apostles in two rows below.



The stone figures on the reredos are of St. Cedd (left), who brought, in 653, the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to the East Saxons, and of St. Alban, England's first Christian martyr (right). Under the sill below the reredos are the symbols of the Passion of Christ. These are, left to right: 30 pieces of silver; the 5 stigmata: wounds in heart, hands and feet; the instruments of the crucifixion - scourge, ladder, sponge on reed, spear, hammer and pincers; and the crown of thorns.

The St Leonard's banner, housed in the choir stalls, was made in 1994 for the Bradwell Pilgrimage.

The organ is one of the best in this area. It was re-built by Norman & Beard and still retains its original action, parts of which date from mid-19th century. An organ fund provided for the phased restoration of the instrument; phase 1 was completed in 2013; phase 2 in 2019.

Music for worship is provided, not only on the organ, but also by the piano. Some members of the congregation lead with guitars, and some recorded music on video brings new songs to the congregation.

Technological developments have also provided a necessary sound system with an induction loop for the hearing-impaired. Much of the liturgy is now also presented on screen for the 11 am services.

Southminster Primary School is an academy within the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust and it visits the church regularly. After one such visit the School decided to have a similar Prayer Board in a quiet area of the school. The Church was glad to make this possible. There are now regular prayer spaces used in the school. Church leaders take collective worship services in the School once a week.



Through the door is the Chapel. William Lowder dedicated it to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Later, more evangelical ministers have dropped the term “Lady” chapel. This useful little room with its modern suspended ceiling meets many needs. Here the Church Council meets; children are taught; mid-week groups meet for prayer, worship, Bible study and social activities. Holy Communion is celebrated here every Sunday at 8 am using the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

Each Summer the Church runs a Holiday Club for Southminster children of Primary School age. A week of the Summer holiday sees the church transformed - into a park, or a desert island, or the seaside or an Olympic stadium, or a Theatre or even a Fish & Chip Shop while songs, jokes, drama, games and practical activities combine to give the message of Jesus to the children. The church also serves the Community through “Little Lions”, a weekly mother and toddler group meeting during term-time in the Memorial Hall opposite the church. This enables people to ‘thaw’ sufficiently to come to some Sunday worship, tailored for young people, once a month. Some banners round the church have been designed and made by members of our congregation, often helped by children.

In the North transept is the former choir vestry, now a store for staging, flower arranging, musical and craft equipment. On the wall is a contemporary artist's drawing of how the church used to be in about 1819.

Before you leave the inside of the building, please sit and spend time in prayer and quiet reflection, for this church building dedicated to St. Leonard, a hermit and man of prayer, is God's house and has been so for nearly 900 years.

Take a look at our notice boards, inside and in the porch, to see details of our regular services, recent activities and our worldwide and local community links.

And do, please, sign our Visitors' Book.

When you leave you might like to take a **'Walk Round the Outside.'** On the immediate right in the porch is a stoup, originally for holy water. Visitors would dip a finger in the water and trace a cross on their forehead with their wet finger. Now it usually contains an arrangement of flowers.

The niches over the porch entrance must at one time have had figures in them; the centre one was probably of a Virgin and Child. Under the niche is a sword piercing a heart, recalling the words of Simeon in Luke's Gospel as he warned that her Son would be, "a sign that will be opposed, ... and a sword will pierce your own soul, too". Very likely, the statues were destroyed during the Reformation.



The porch gates were installed in 1997 as a deterrent to vandals. They were designed and made by a local artist-blacksmith, Michael Hoyle. They achieved a design award from the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches.



Their subject is the Calvary crosses and the Crown of thorns. The gates are left open during the day to provide access to the Church and to the Community notice-boards on either side of the door. These supplement the notice-boards facing Station Road

and Burnham Road.

The war memorial commemorates those from Southminster who died in the 1914-18, 1939-45 and Korean wars. Volunteers from the Church maintain the flower bed round the memorial. Now turn to your left.



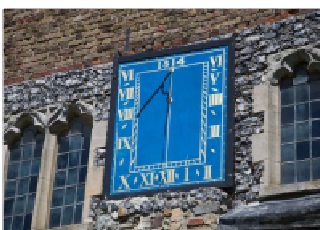
From the outside, our building could never be described as beautiful but it has its points of interest. The base of the nave and tower are of 12th century rubble and Roman brick. The tower was raised further in the 16th century. The massive buttress on the South West corner suggests that there has been a structural problem ever since it was built.

The tower has a peal of 8 bells. For some years they were not rung because of fears for the safety of the tower structure. They began ringing again in 2000, mainly for special occasions and when visiting teams enjoy the experience. The oldest bell dates from 1684 and the two newest were added in 1966 after two subscriptions, one from the village, one from the Southminster farmers. Some new bell ropes were fitted in 2013 and there is regular maintenance.



On both the North and South nave walls it is easy to see three distinct layers of building, the Norman base, the Tudor flint clerestory, and Georgian brick.

The round-headed Norman doorway on the South side has a mediaeval scratch dial on its Eastern jamb. Its purpose is not clear but it may have been a kind of rudimentary



sundial. When the priest placed a stick in the hole it cast a shadow. The large sundial high up on the wall was erected by Dr A.J. Scott (Vicar 1803-1840). After severe

weathering, it was restored by the British Sundial Society in 2010.



Weathering has taken its toll on the tower and we will restore it as and when funds permit. The roof has also had weather damage and was repaired in stages during 2011. The north wall of the nave awaits attention because of damp damage.

The church has three Graveyards. Two of them are now closed for burials. At the Eastern end of the South nave wall the remains of a large red brick 12th century arch are visible. Walk right round to the East end and you can see the outline of the original lower level of the East windows between 1819 and about 1900.

In the oldest graveyard, to the South of the church, lies the grave of George Campion Berkeley, Vicar for fifty years from 1840-1890. Some of the graves are Commonwealth War Graves and are maintained by the War Graves Commission. Along the wall to the East is an area for the burial of cremated remains, consecrated in 1999.

Bronze plaques commemorate those whose ashes are buried here.

The grass in the churchyard is kept under control by volunteers from the Church, and the Community Pay Back teams.

Now continue back to the North side of the church. A survey of the parish made in 1790 showed a row of little cottages standing between the church and the road. They were pulled down when the church was enlarged in 1808-19. The railings which originally topped the perimeter wall went to help the war effort during the Second World War. There was a suggestion, taken to the Parish Council in about 2007, that the railings should be replaced. It was rejected when a church member pointed out that the railings would give a “Keep Out” message to the Community the church aims to serve, and also that by now three generations of small Southminster children have enjoyed walking on the wall, encouraged by their parents. They are welcome to continue this now-established custom.

To the North-East of the church lie the graves of John Hackblock (born 1732) and his son Peter (died 1835). These local Doctors left money to the Church and Village that to this day, as the Hackblock Educational Charity, helps local children and young people to further their education.

**WE ARE GLAD YOU HAVE VISITED
THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST LEONARD, SOUTHMINSTER**

Our prayer is that as you go on your way your spiritual life may grow and develop, even as the spiritual life of the worshippers in St Leonard's Church has changed, grown, developed and matured over the centuries.

As the priest says at the end of the Communion service:
"Go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

In 2024, our regular Sunday services are	
Every Sunday:	8 am Holy Communion (BCP)
First Sundays	11 am Holy Communion
Second Sundays	11 am Family Celebration
Third & Fourth Sundays	11 am Morning Worship
Fifth Sunday (when necessary)	11 am United Worship with Steeple



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See our web site
www.stleonardsouthminster.org.uk