

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



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



**The
Christingle
Service
was
enjoyed
at
Steeple
Church
on 3rd
December**

JANUARY 2024

**Cast all your anxiety on God because
He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)**

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

*Articles for the February
magazine should be with
Kath Dunstan by, at the latest,
Sunday 14th January
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!)

Vicar's Reflection

Psalm 30: 12 O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You for ever.

Suddenly we find ourselves into 2024! What happened to the last year?

What did happen last year was that God truly blessed us greatly as a benefice, to be able to pay our parish shares; to welcome new people into the congregations; to repair and maintain our lovely churches and to grow in knowledge and love of God. There have been several great events that have drawn people both to church and to contribute to the life of the church. We've enjoyed celebrations, meals, fun-days and craft-days; Holiday clubs, Vintage Gatherings, Sunday lunches, another Alpha course (first one since Covid!) and gatherings of all sorts., thank God! Thank Him hugely!! For these types of events could not take place over these past few years, and because we have the blessing of some wonderful & willing volunteers, we are able to hold events that encourage people and encourage community.

Our service on a Sunday morning at 8.00 a.m. includes the words "It is meet, right and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, everlasting God".

It is also an instruction from Paul to the Thessalonian church “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”. Jesus gave thanks to the Father for His disciples, for food, for understanding, for wisdom and for God’s watchfulness over us at all times (... *He cares for us affectionately and cares about us watchfully.* 1 Peter 5:7)

The Psalmist David gives thanks in many of the Psalms for the faithfulness of God. Psalm 57 says “*I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to You among the nations*”. From remembering what God has done we are able to think what God can do! For in Luke chapter 1 it says that nothing is impossible for God.

The advent wreath over these past weeks has reminded us of patriarchs, prophets, John the baptiser and Mary; all the while giving thanks for their faithful lives and their joy at bringing news of the messiah to those around them. We forget that they were ordinary people who had difficult lives at times, but they served a God who would see them through any circumstance that arose. Abram walked around for twenty years before he became a father for the first time at nearly one hundred year of age..... Isaac was nearly killed by his own father. John the baptiser was a nomad; ridiculed for this message. Mary had the stigma of being pregnant whilst unmarried. None of these people

had an easy journey of faith yet thanked God for His faithfulness in what He had done and thankfulness for what He was going to do.

As we step into this new year we do so with God and all that He is able to achieve with us and in us; we journey together with God to explore His purposes and to seek His will for us as individuals and us as a church benefice. We enter the new year with immense thankfulness to God for coming among us and making His dwelling with us. May we continue to receive Him throughout this year. 1 Corinthians 2: 9 says “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived God has prepared [made and keeps ready*] for those who love Him. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you for ever.” [*] *from the Amplified Bible*

Blessings,

Peter.

A True Story from an American preacher



The Nativity Play was going as planned and Joseph and Mary were going from house to house, knocking on the doors and asking if there was any room for them.

As they continued to get “No room” answers, a little voice called from the back “YOU SHOULD HAVE BOOKED!” bringing the house down.

How does your Garden grow?

It never ceases to amaze me how flowers and vegetables grow each year from seeds or from bulbs which often lay dormant throughout the Winter months and then know exactly when to sprout! Mind you the flowers are pretty confused now we have differing weather patterns and the air is warmer. We seem to be cutting our lawns later and pruning well in to the winter months.

So, as we believe that the plant life, although dormant for a time is still alive and active in the dark and then springs to life, how is our faith similar? Do we have dormant times when nothing seems to be happening. Times when we pray for and sow seeds of faith into someone's life but don't seem to see any visible fruit from it. Times when we pray for someone or ourselves for healing or a change in circumstance and we seem to hear or feel nothing.



In a recent Word For Today reading the headline was "You Can't Have A Testimony Without A Test". We need to be tested periodically, especially in our faith, to assess what we've learnt, what we're capable of and where we need to grow. St Paul loves to tell believers to rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances and he was a believer who was beaten, thrown in to jail and run out of town more than once! He was certainly tested to the extreme at times but his faith grew strong and sure and he endured to the end.

As we tend our gardens, our vegetable plots and allotments, we need to dig out unwanted weeds that choke the plants, we need to add nutrients to the soil to keep it fertile. We need to keep the soil well-watered and also need to keep a good eye out for unwanted insects especially caterpillars that eat away, especially, at my well-loved broccoli! Our growth in the faith is so similar, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to show us any “weeds” in our lives that hinder our growth, we need to feed daily and soak in the Word of God and to look out for anything that may eat away at our faith too.



Perhaps as we look forward to Spring and new growth in the ground, we can look at our lives and see how we can grow more in our faith and where perhaps some parts need pruning to make way for new growth. We need often to ask for prayer and encouragement from others to keep believing that God is working even when it all seems dark and quiet.

The chorus of one of the modern songs we sing called “Way Maker” says “Even though I can’t see it you’re working, even though I can’t feel it you’re working, you’re always working. You are the promise keeper, the light in the darkness”. Let’s stand on His promises and keep growing well.

Brenda Sheppard

A prayer at the end of COP 28, the United Nations Annual Climate Conference 2023.

God of blessings,
the universe indeed sings of your glory.

Deepen our gratitude for all you have made
and awaken in us a renewed commitment
to care for the Earth and each other
including those who are already
suffering because of climate change.

Inspire world leaders in the wake of COP 28
with openness to listen
to those most affected by climate change
and with courage to act urgently and wisely,
so that our common home may be healed
and restored and all people and generations
to come may delight in it.

Amen.

Via The Reverend Sandra Eldridge,
Diocesan Environment Officer

Another article which came to us after the Christmas issue of our magazine had gone for printing is this letter from the Bishop of Chelmsford. The message is still relevant because Christianity looks forward to the fulfilment of all that God has promised us through Jesus. She writes:

I wonder when it is that the Christmas season becomes real for you? For many people, music plays a key part in that process, perhaps when we first hear or sing a favourite Christmas Carol, or when we hear Christmas songs playing while we're out doing our shopping, or listening to the radio.

One such song which particularly resonates for me during Advent and in the preparations towards Christmas is 'Driving home for Christmas' - the old favourite by Chris Rea. Perhaps part of its lasting appeal, and why it still tugs on my heart strings all these years later is that it draws so strongly on our positive associations of 'home' - the longings that each one of us has, for warmth and security, whether that's based in actual bricks and mortar, in a specific location or on something less physical, maybe relationships with family and friends or memories of people and places.

In the Christian faith, the notion of home is frequently used to communicate the idea of being with God, and to knowing that presence as a place of comfort, security and peace, regardless of what may be going on in our lives or the world around us. At Christmas we remember the astonishing fact that, in the birth of Jesus Christ, God came to dwell with us, to make his home among us. The events of the first Christmas are rooted in a particular time and place but God's presence abides still and the invitation to draw near remains for each one of us.

And so in the midst of our Christmas preparations, however you are experiencing them and however you're feeling, I pray that you will know the truth of this reality for yourself - that this invitation is extended to you. That God invites you home this Christmas, to discover afresh how the birth of Jesus brings light and life into our present reality, and with it deep hope for all that lies ahead. I wish you a happy and blessed Christmas.

+ Guli Chetmsford

Sunday 7th January

The Baptism of Christ

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/President/Preacher

Acts 19 : 1 - 7

Mark 1 : 4 - 11

Sidesperson

Rev'd Peter & Brenda Sheppard

Celebrant

Celebrant

Gordon Baker

11.00 Holy Communion

President/Preacher

Readings as above

Intercessions

Prayer Ministry

Audio-visuals

Sidesperson

Refreshments

Rev'd Peter / Brenda Sheppard

Paul Lucas

Gwyneth Iffland

Christine Lucas & Sarah Prendergast

Christine Morgan

Paul Lucas

Eira Hagger & Frances Hatfield

Sunday 14th January

2nd Sunday of Epiphany

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/President/Preacher

Revelation 5 : 1 - 10

John 1 : 43 - end

Sidesperson

Rev'd Ken Dunstan

Celebrant

Celebrant

Paul Lucas

11.00 FAMILY CELEBRATION

Leaders

Audio-visuals

Prayer Ministry

Sidesperson

Refreshments

Rev'd Jacqui & team

Christine Lucas

Brenda Sheppard & Sylvia Adams

Leon Flack

Sally Culff & Maureen Smith

Sunday 21st January

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

President/Preacher
Revelation 19 : 6 - 10
John 2 : 1 - 11
Sidesperson

3rd Sunday of Epiphany

Rev'd Peter/ Rev'd Jacqui
Celebrant
Celebrant
Leon Flack

11.00 Morning Worship : Hackblock service

Leader/preacher	Rev'd Peter/ Rev'd Jacqui
Readings	Rupert Killick
Intercessions	Brenda Sheppard
Prayer Ministry	Fiona Begley & Frances Hatfield
Audio-Visuals	Christine Morgan
Sidesperson	Nigel Winger
Refreshments	Social Committee

Sunday 28th January

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/Preacher
Revelation 12: 1 - 5a
Mark 1 : 21 - 28
Sidesperson

4th Sunday of Epiphany

Rev'd Jacqui/Norman Pratt
Celebrant
Celebrant
tba

11.00 Morning Worship -

Leader/Preacher	Rev'd Jacqui/Norman Pratt
Readings as above	Christine Morgan
Intercessions	Fiona Begley
Prayer Ministry	Yvonne Thurbon & Keith Hatfield
Audio-Visuals	Sylvia Adams
Sidesperson	Kath Dunstan
Refreshments	Christine Lucas & Sandra Billingham

Steeple Church News

Steeple Church has services every Sunday morning at 9.15am unless otherwise advertised on the church door. We have Morning Prayer with activities for children on the first and third Sunday each month, 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

The Limes at Burnham provided Steeple with a tall and magnificent Christmas tree again this year. It arrived on the Friday before our Carols & Christingles service so we had a busy Saturday getting it erected and decorated in time.

The children made their own Christingles, ably supervised by Jenny who also explained the significance of its features. It was late afternoon, so when everyone had their Christingle, we lined up along either side of the aisle, lit the candles that were embedded in the oranges and turned out the lights, before processing to the Chancel for a blessing.

As the Christmas season comes to an end we must prepare the church for the funeral of Norman DeAth, widower of Marion DeAth, two of our most dedicated supporters during their lifetimes.

We wish you a healthy and prosperous 2024 →

LOOKING BACK OVER DECEMBER CHURCH EVENTS IN SOUTHMINSTER

2nd December: A craft morning was held in church which was attended by many children and adults alike. It was a very successful morning and without a doubt it was a huge success. Grateful thanks go to Karen Flack for the massive amount of preparation work that largely contributed to this.

On the same day, SOCS held their Winter Concert in church. The afternoon audience was quite large but the evening one had fewer people attending, probably because of the bad weather on that day.

5th December: The church opened at 5pm for sponsors to decorate their Christmas Trees which had arrived the day before. The sponsors were made up of many local business organisations, charities and individuals. It was a hectic few hours but oh what a transformation, the trees looked absolutely beautiful and were perfect Christmas decorations in the church.

6th December: The Light up a Life service was held and very well attended. The service was prepared by Farleigh Hospice for whom funds were raised. Mulled wine and mince pies helped to warm attendees after the service.

9th December: The Tree Festival saw the church doors open for people to see and admire the Christmas trees and.....for visits to Santa. There was also another opportunity for children to make more crafts. Another very successful event with so many volunteers to help and serve refreshments.

(More notes on page 18)

Steeple Church contacts

Rev'd Canon Peter Begley, Vicar 01621 772 300
Rhona Leech, Churchwarden & PCC Secretary,

Teresa Julien, Churchwarden,
Peter Marshall, PCC Treasurer & Verger,

Henry Church Cleaning Club 2024

A New Year and the cleaning continues on in the Church! We are blessed to be part of a great team but there is always plenty of room for new recruits. 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.

You will be made very welcome.



The Southminster Food Pantry

continues to meet on Wednesday mornings at Christ Church, but it now has an extra collection point: on Thursday afternoons at Burnham URC

If you are willing to donate food for the Pantry there is a list of basic requirements at the back of church. In these difficult times more and more people are in need of what some of us take for granted.

Loss and Grief



We were sad to hear of the death of John Anderson in early December. He had experienced deteriorating health for some time but we recognise what his death has meant to his wife, his family and all the people with whom he had worked over the years, especially the Parish Council. His funeral will be in Southminster St Leonard's church at 2pm on January 3rd, so many of the decorated Christmas trees will be removed early to make the church atmosphere appropriate.

SOUTHMINSTER MEMORIAL HALL

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



Chatterbox 2024



And so, we start a New Year with Chatterbox and we look forward to being together with our faithful friends who come each week and also to welcoming new people who would like to come and join us on Thursday mornings from 10-12 in the Memorial Hall. Chatterbox lives up to its name as there is always a lovely buzz of chatter and also lots of tea and coffee and biscuits. We also have jigsaws always on the go and different craft activities. We have also recently acquired a laptop computer for people to learn new skills.

You will be made very welcome and If you would like more information, please ring Norman.

Little Lions meet regularly on Wednesday mornings during term-time. It is basically for babies/toddlers and their carers. The whole families appreciate their time together, and the support from the leaders.



DENGIE HUNDRED LADIES GROUP

will meet on 23rd January

Doreen Levy : Quizzes and Games

Competition: Winter photograph

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.

March 2024	3	10	17	24	31 (Easter Day)
April 2024	7	14	21	28	

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

The St. Leonard’s Together Apart Facebook Group

I prayerfully decided to start the "Together Apart" facebook group at the beginning of the first lockdown and posted on the page at least 6 days of each week. 3 years on lockdowns now seem to be long behind us and the interaction with the group is now minimal so after a lot of thought and prayer it was decided that I would no longer post on this group daily.

The group will remain open and I will occasionally post things that I think may be of interest. Please feel free to post on there too.

Thanks to all those who have interacted over the past three years.

Karen Flack

CORONAVIRUS 2022

We are pleased that most restrictions were lifted but we do need to be aware of possible new viruses, so we must continue cautiously. New information will be available on posters & on-line.

To keep aware of what is happening, and to participate on line with services, log into the website <https://www.stleonardsouthminster.org.uk/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/stleonardstogetherapart/>

Also, we have a WhatsApp group entitled “Together Apart Our Church”. Lots of people are involved in that.

These links have been greatly appreciated by regular Church family members and also by people who have not, to date, attended our church services. In difficult times, like this, we need 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.

Continuing notes about December events in church *(from page 13)*

17th December: The community carol service in church was attended by many people. Local groups were represented by providing readers for the nine lessons. The SOCS choir attended and treated us all to their wonderful musical talents and, of course to lead the carol singing.

24th December: The crib service was held in church in the afternoon and it was followed later with the traditional Midnight Holy Communion.

25th December: Christmas day began with morning Holy Communion followed by a Family Celebration service.

31st December - the 5th Sunday of December - we hosted our normal United Service at 11am. Members of the URC and Steeple Church are always welcome at such services.

Some further comments from Kathy Carnell, who is representing the church Social Committee.

During December, all of these events were supported by volunteers in the preparation and serving refreshments and clearing away at the end of each event. We were aided by other volunteers who jumped into anything that required an extra pair of hands.

Throughout the December period, we served in the region of 140 mince pies, several litres of mulled wine plus gallons of tea and coffee. The social committee wish to extend their thanks to all those who volunteered their time and contributed to the successful provision of refreshments during this busy period.

We look forward to welcoming people to events in 2024.

PRAY FOR SOUTHMINSTER:

w/b	7 January	South - West
w/b	14 January	Central - West
w/b	21 January	North - East
w/b	28 January	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

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.



Everyone is
welcome to join.
Details on board.

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

The new course details will be on the notice
board and at the back of church.