

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

StL

and also for Steeple Parish

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



Who am I?



Old? Yes.

Older anyway ...



**I'm in God's hands,
and safely alive.**

MAY 2026

**I praise you because I am fearfully and
wonderfully made; your works are
wonderful, I know that full well.**

(Psalm 139: verse 14)

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

I hope you will receive this issue before 3rd May. Our deliverers always make an effort to do this.

Articles for the June magazine should be with

*Kath Dunstan by, at the latest, **Sunday 17th May***

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!)

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

Reflection from Jenny Pratt

I woke up this morning, looked in the mirror and thought “Who is that?” It was not the young beautiful woman I was expecting to see. It was more like an old haggard reflection of my father. What had happened? When had I suddenly got old? This month is the birthday month when another year is added. So how old are you? How old do you feel? There is a saying that you are as old as the man (or woman) you feel. Well, that makes me VERY old indeed! The truth is, I never feel any different. Yes, the bones ache, the pace slows, the memory What was I going to say? But the stuff that makes me who I am still remains me.

At Spring Harvest this year Norman and I went to a talk called ‘Faith in Old Age’. The first question was, “What do you hate about getting old?” My immediate answer was trying to keep awake during talks!” Trying to keep up with technology also gets more difficult. The frustrations of not being able to get gadgets to work is incredible. You should see the bite marks all around my laptop. And just when you get it to work, it gets updated and you must start all over again!

Our bodies age and we are viewed differently by society. So there are an awful lot of products out there to help us to keep looking young. Did you know you can buy ‘Botox Bee Venom’ that will eliminate all your wrinkles? (Let me know if it works). To help you lose weight, there are creams, gummy sweets, patches, injections etc. I met a man on holiday who was obese and was so glad that the NHS had given him approval to have the injections. He was having a course of six injection at £600 each. Being eternally young comes at a price. The advice used to be ‘Eat less, move more.’

Did you know that you are the exact age God wants you to be. Use your walking stick to aid you, not condemn you. God doesn't count the number of times you need the wee or an afternoon nap. Carry your bus pass with pride.

God created you in your mother's womb and he knew you were wonderful.

God protected you through your childhood and knew you were amazing.

God has seen you through the youthful years and knew you were brilliant.

God saw you through middle age and knew you were capable.

God will see you through old age knowing you are perfect.

Psalm 139:14 – I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well.

God sees the result of ageing, but it's your heart and soul he loves.

Be proud of your age, God is proud of you.

Jenny Pratt

This poem (author unknown) is shared by Hazel Mann :

The Hands of Jesus

What wealth to meet this world's demands
Is found engraved on Jesus' hands;
Hands with the chisel and saw so sure
For Nazareth homes made furniture.
Ploughs for the farmer, for the oxen a yoke
So doing He mingled with ordinary folk.
Precious hands which in God's plan
Were the humble hands of a working man

Talented hands at the carpenter's bench
Hands that were strong to twist and to wrench
But nothing could their beauty spoil
For though oft stained with daily toil
His hands were never marred by sin
For He, himself was pure within
Hands that since the world began
Were the holy hands of a sinless man.

Sympathetic hands were they
Touching all who came His way.
The blind, the lame found life anew
For His were the hands of a healer too.
The dead were raised, the lepers cured
One touch of His hand and their health was assured
Power to heal, to help to bless
Hands of infinite tenderness.

Nail-pierced and scarred, with love possessed
The hands of Jesus at their best!
Hands that could have been torn apart
The very cross that broke His heart
But chose instead to keep quite still
That they might do His Father's will

These wonderful hands deep wounded for me
The hands of a keeper for ever will be,
For none can pluck me from His hand
For by His death redeemed I stand.
What perfect protection; how splendidly sure
To be in the hands of my Lord evermore.
Hands that will love me, hands so divine
Wonderful Saviour, hold on to mine.

A Spring in Your Step

Brenda Sheppard

After a gloomy wet Winter isn't it good to have the beauty of Spring and at last the sunshine. Spring being a time of renewing energy from the sun's rays; a mood enhancing time; a time to put a spring in our steps.

This time of year, is a time of new beginnings isn't it; our gardens and allotments spring to life, the earth has thawed out and warmed up ready for planting and new growth. The birds have also start nesting and laying eggs. New Life.

Thinking of birds Isn't it fascinating how a chick grows in a shell, feeding off the egg yolk and the egg white (the albumen), and then when ready after around 21 days, breaks out of that shell into its new life.



We, too, as people need new life; we often need to come out of our shell, the hard shell often of protection and safety. Do we sometimes prefer to stay in our shell? Maybe shackles of the past hinder us, maybe shackles of sin surround us and we feel unworthy to break free and allow Jesus into our lives to free us and to be re-born into a new life, an eternal life with Him and for us to feed on His words of life.

It's hard sometimes to think of ourselves as sinners isn't it and what is sin? Sin is anything that misses the mark of God's standards. We can sin in thought, word and deed or regrettable actions that can be selfish, hurtful or cause harm. But the good news is we can be set free because Jesus came to die for our sins; to take all our sins upon the cross and we can always come to Him for forgiveness and grow to be more like Him in all that we do and say. We can break away from all that hinders us and keeps us trapped in our protective but restricting shell.

I love the hymn “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing” by Charles Wesley especially the 3rd verse where he says about Jesus:

“He breaks the power of cancelled sin;
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me”.



Jesus is our source of freedom so just as the chick breaks free from the confines of its shell let us be brave, shake off all that hinders us, break out and fly!

SOME SPECIAL SERVICES THIS MONTH

Thursday 14th May Ascension Day

19.30 Holy Communion BCP

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Leader/Preacher | Rev'd Peter /Brenda Sheppard |
| Acts 1: 1-11 & Luke 24 : 44 - end | |
| Sidesperson | Leon Flack |

Sunday 31st May TRINITY SUNDAY

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Leader/Preacher | Rev'd Peter /Ken Dunstan |
| 2 Corinthians 13 : 11- end | & Matthew 28: 16 - end |
| Sidesperson | Keith Hatfield |

11.00 United Morning Worship

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Leader/Preacher | Rev'd Peter/ Ken Dunstan |
| Readings as above | Linda Payne |
| Intercessions | Rupert Killick |
| Prayer Ministry | Fiona Begley & Sylvia Adams |
| Audio-visuals | Christine Morgan |
| Sidesperson | 7 Kath Dunstan |
| Refreshments | Frances Hatfield & Kathy Carnell |

Some thoughts about Pilgrimage from Christine Lucas

Archbishop Sarah Mullally gave a wonderfully encouraging sermon at her recent Installation. She talks about the pilgrim path that she and every Christian is on, and how knowing that God is with us on the journey makes all the difference. On the Feast of the Annunciation, she challenges us to have the audacity to believe with Mary that God can do the impossible, and that, with Him, we too can achieve extraordinary things! The moment of encounter between Mary and the Angel Gabriel announces the mystery of the Incarnation – the definitive moment that reveals ‘God-with-us’, Immanuel. Like Mary, all we need to do is to pray obediently, Here I am!"

Unless we are staunch atheists, all of us are indeed on a journey of faith; a pilgrimage path. And we know that atheists can, and often do, change their minds!!

Each person is at a different stage.

We might be agnostic or enquirers.

We could be newborn Christians requiring tender nurturing on the milk of the Word, being held close to our Heavenly Father's heart.

Or perhaps we are tentatively crawling towards God, especially when no-one else is looking!

Some folk are beginning to toddle, eagerly exploring the world of faith; hungry for solid food.

Others are confidently walking with Christ, trusting in Him each day, maybe striding out to serve Him in deeper obedience.

As we know, this often continues until we encounter problems, setbacks or suffering which make it harder to see Him through our pain and tears.

Or we stumble when we remove our gaze from Him to become entangled in life's distractions, or we are overwhelmed by worry, or tempted to despair.

It is only then we can realise that He is not far out in front, like the leader of a hike.

He is right here beside us, holding our hand, helping us to arise;

Offering forgiveness and strength to continue the journey.

He even carries us over life's most uneven and challenging terrain, (as in the well-known 'Footprints' poem).

Eventually He enables us to do more than walk! We are given strength to run in the race of faith, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith.

Occasionally we experience especially blessed times when our spirits spontaneously leap and dance for joy in praise to our wonderful majestic triune Creator God: our Heavenly Father, our Saviour and Comforter, who has promised in Scripture that He will never leave us or forsake us.

As we travel together let us be mindful that we are all at different stages on our faith path.

Let us always show each other love and encouragement, especially when the way is uneven, slippery or steep, building trust as we share our trials. As we pass through new places and meet new people, may we warmly invite them to walk with us, and be encouraged by their hospitality, even if they are not 'one of us'.

May we enjoy plenty of good fellowship, helpful teaching and laughter along the road!

We need never walk alone!

Each of us is on a journey towards our heavenly home, where Christ has gone before.

Where He waits to welcome us.

Where His Word teaches us there is room for all who sincerely follow the Way, believe the Truth and abide in His Life.

The holy mystery is that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, God is simultaneously leading us, walking beside us, carrying us, living in us, and waiting for us in heaven!

In conclusion, we can be encouraged by Archbishop Sarah's words: "In the Incarnation, we see God becoming one of us, and this gives us such hope for the Church. We are called to trust, even when we see so much in the world that makes hope seem impossible. God's people can be a simple, loving presence in the world, like the salt of the earth, offering a listening ear, a word of encouragement or prayer for healing; offering food and shelter, sanctuary and welcome...tables to sit at and conversations to be shared. God is at work in the good news of the gospel and in the hearts and lives of ordinary people, who – like Mary – have the audacity to believe that with God we can do extraordinary things." Hallelujah!

Christine Lucas

Sunday 3rd May

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/President/Preacher

Acts 7 : 55 - end

John 14 : 1 - 14

Sidesperson

5th Sunday of Easter

Rev'd Peter

Celebrant

Celebrant

Gordon Baker

11.00 Family Holy Communion and Annual PC Meeting

President/Preacher

Readings as above

Intercessions

Prayer Ministry

Audio-visuals

Sidesperson

Refreshments

Rev'd Peter

Pauline Siggers

Brenda Sheppard

Jenni Blomfield & Christine Lucas

Christine Morgan

Paul Lucas

Sarah Prendergast & Ray Kempen

Sunday 10th May

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/President/Preacher

Acts 17: 22 - 31

John 14 : 15 - 21

Sidesperson

6th Sunday of Easter

Rev'd Ken Dunstan

Celebrant

Celebrant

Leon Flack

11.00 Family Celebration

Leaders

Prayer Ministry

Audio-visuals

Sidesperson

Refreshments

Team: Karen, Jenny, Dawn

Fiona Begley & Yvonne Thurbon

Christine Lucas

Brenda Sheppard

Sally Culff & Maureen Smith

Thursday 14th May Ascension Day See page 7 for details.

Sunday 31st May Sunday services details also on Page 7

Sunday 17th May

7th Sunday of Easter

08.00 Holy Communion BCP

President/Preacher

Rev'd Peter & Norman Pratt

Acts 1:6 - 14

Celebrant

John 17:1 - 11

Celebrant

Sidesperson

Paul Lucas

11.00 Morning Worship

Leader/Preacher

Jenny Pratt / Norman Pratt

Readings

Gwyneth Iffland

Intercessions

Fiona Begley

Audio-visuals

Christine Morgan

Prayer ministry

Christine Lucas & Frances Hatfield

Sidesperson

Gwyneth Iffland

Refreshments

Dee Byford & Jenni Blomfield

Sunday 24th May

Day of Pentecost



08.00 Holy Communion BCP

Leader/Preacher

Rev'd Peter

Acts 2:1 - 21

Celebrant

John 20:19 - 23

Celebrant

Sidesperson

Paul Lucas

10.15 Café Church Morning Worship

Leader/Preacher

Rev'd Peter

Readings as at 8 am

Christine Morgan

Intercessions

Frances Hatfield

Prayer Ministry

Kathy Carnell & Sarah Prendergast

Audio-visuals

Sylvia Adams

Sidesperson

Brenda Sheppard

Refreshments

Christine Lucas & Sandra Bradford



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

Peter Marshall, PCC Treasurer & Verger,

Steeple's May Services in brief

(Service titles and leaders only)

3rd 09.15 Family Service Rev'd Peter

10th 09.15 Holy Communion Rev'd Ken Dunstan

17th 09.15 Family Service Jenny Pratt & Norman Pratt

24th 09.15 Holy Communion Rev'd Peter

31st 11.00 United Service at Southminster

The Steeple Tithe Map, printed in 1839, has been framed and is now in the church vestry, mounted on the wall surrounding the toilet. The map is drawn to a very large scale to depict individual houses and fields, as existing almost two centuries ago.

In those far off days, village churches and their incumbents were financed by tithes, a form of tax levied on fields and buildings.

The map can be inspected any Saturday or Sunday when Steeple Church is normally open throughout the day.

The tithe system became very unpopular among those not connected with the established church and was finally abolished ninety years ago. But it has echoes in today's Parish Share system through which parishes contribute to the costs of running and staffing the diocese.

To that end, our 'fund-raising' activities are vitally important to the continuation of Steeple Church so we are actively planning the 2026 Wheels, Hooves & Paws show at Elmwood Equestrian, Burnham-on-Crouch on 4th July and the Steeple Gathering at Grange Farm, Steeple just seven weeks later.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

**The Annual Parochial Church Meeting
for St Leonard's Church will be held in church
(in the chapel) after the 11 am Service
on Sunday 3rd May.**

**If you aren't able to attend the Service,
please feel welcome at the meeting anyway.**

POSSIBLE ROTA DETAILS: YOUR AVAILABILITY FOR 2 MONTHS

We can worship regularly in church as usual, 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.

| | | | | |
|-----------|---|----|----|----|
| June 2026 | 7 | 14 | 21 | 28 |
| July 2026 | 5 | 12 | 19 | 26 |

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.

Our special **Easter Craft Morning** went well.

In fact, so well that there were 70 in attendance.

We were also grateful to the Church people who assisted with
moving chairs and tables around in advance
and for the tidying up afterwards.

It was good, also, to welcome so many families at the
Sunday Family Celebration Service.

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.

May dates are: Fri. 8th & 22nd

If you would like to give it a try and would like a rota please speak to me, Brenda Sheppard.

The Hive (Southminster Community Hub)

Dengie Food Bank – Wednesdays 10 am-12 noon
Donations to be received from 9am

Lulu's Café – Fridays 11-2pm

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

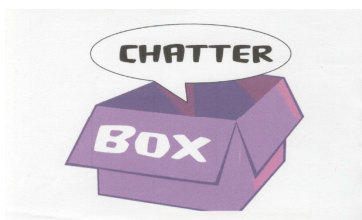
Social Supermarket

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.

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 26th May

Speaker: Karis Galliano (The Hive) & Seated Yoga

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.

SOME GOOD NEWS FOR CHURCH MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Thank you for your contributions to the **Christmas Shoebox Appeal**. We sent 90 to the Headquarters as part of the 3,700 which were sent to children worldwide in need.

The **Sid Bolan Big Band** concert on **March 28th** was very much appreciated and well-supported, so we look forward to welcoming them here again at some stage. After the costs of the evening were paid we were able to send £600 to the **Knightswood Day Care Centre**. We continue to pray for the Centre of course, and we now include the Big band in our prayers too.

Coming up on **Saturday 9th May** we will be welcoming and enjoying the music of **ELIXIR**. We used to receive the Remedy Band, but they have adjusted their membership and we will enjoy one of their new teams. Money raised by their concert will go to **CHRISTIAN AID**, especially as Christian Aid week will begin on 10th May. There will not be a house-to-house collection this year but envelopes will be available in church so that people can contribute appropriately to this fabulous Christian Charity. Details about Some of their work is at the back of church.
Details from Rupert Killick & Kath Dunstan



PRAY FOR SOUTHMINSTER:

| | | |
|-----|--------|----------------------|
| w/b | 3 May | Central - West |
| w/b | 10 May | North - East |
| w/b | 17 May | Central - North-West |
| w/b | 24 May | Central - East |
| w/b | 31 May | 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.