

May - July 2025

St Leonard's Church

COMMON GROUND

News, events and community in Beoley, Church Hill and Abbey Park





SUMMER 2025

Welcome to the new St Leonard's magazine, Common Ground, which will be issued four times a year in February, May, August and November.

Our plan is to provide you with a range of information: details about church services; social events; competitions and activities for children; a calendar which covers the three months of the edition; 'Looking Ahead' with dates for events that will take place further in the future; updates about church working groups; and general interest articles related to our parish area.

In the digital version there are hyperlinks in the index section which will take you directly to an article: just click on the text below the index image. There are also links to external websites within the Swordmaker article.

If you have any ideas for articles, or wish to provide feedback please speak to one of us or email stleonard.commonground@gmail.com

We hope you enjoy this new format

Revd Gail, Revd Martin, Rose, Philippa

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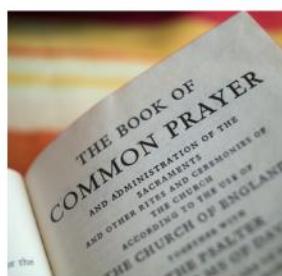
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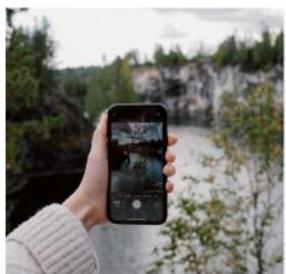
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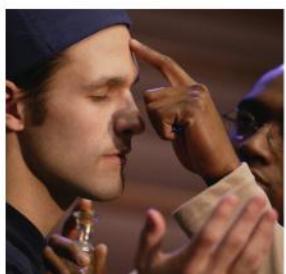
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Vicar Writes:

A New Season, A Living Tradition

Welcome to the brand-new St Leonard's Church Magazine!

We're excited to share this refreshed, reimagined publication with you. For many years, this magazine has faithfully told the story of our church—but like any good story, it's grown, evolved, and taken new turns. This new version is brighter, broader, and more open-hearted, aimed not just at regular churchgoers but at anyone who's curious about what we do, why we do it, and how we're rooted in something far bigger than ourselves.

You'll still find plenty of familiar things here—updates, reflections, events—but now with a fresh focus on the whole life of the church: worship, community, care, celebration, and service. Whether you're deeply involved in church life or just beginning to wonder what faith might mean for you, there's something here for you.

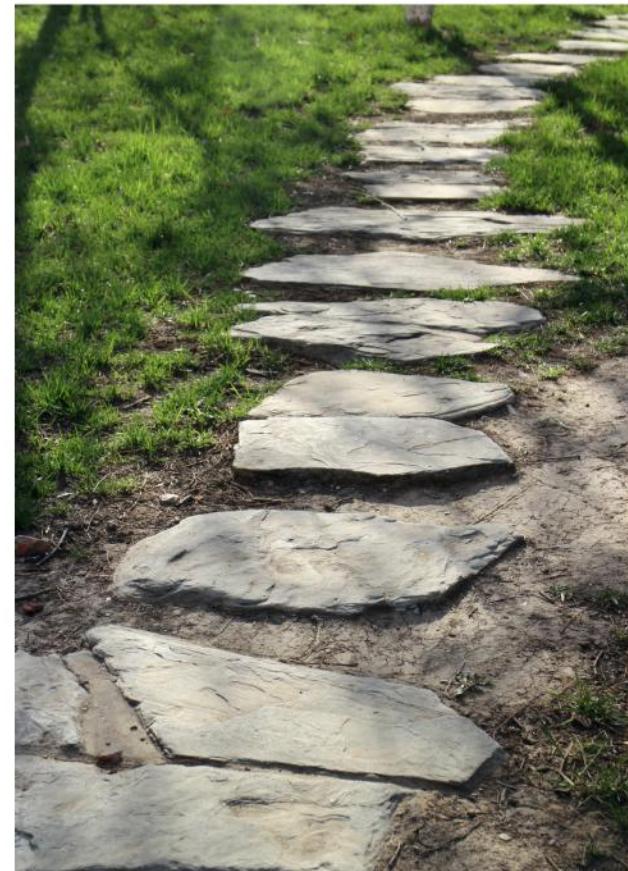
As we launch into this new season, I've been thinking about tradition – not as something dusty or stuck in the past, but as something living, breathing, and moving. Real tradition doesn't freeze time. It invites us to remember where we've come from and to ask where the Spirit is leading us next.

In services where someone is ordained, licensed, or even installed as a new vicar, there's a powerful moment when the church says together: *"We are called to proclaim the gospel afresh in each generation."*

Not a different gospel—but the same good news, spoken in ways that connect, resonate, and make sense in the world we live in today. That's what this magazine is doing too—honouring our past by stepping faithfully into the future.

We see this pattern in Scripture again and again. The prophets speak into the particular needs and challenges of their time. The psalms hold ancient truths in words that still sing to our modern hearts. And then Jesus arrives—God-with-us, walking dusty roads, eating with outsiders, telling stories that still make people stop and think today. Jesus doesn't abandon tradition—but deepens it, fulfils it, and re-frames it with radical love and grace. And Jesus sends us to do the same.

Jesus said, “As God has sent me, so I send you.”



And here we are, still sent—to love, to serve, to speak hope, to build peace, to create communities where everyone is welcomed and known.



You'll find plenty of glimpses of that life in the pages ahead—what's been happening, what's coming up, and how you might get involved. From worship to social events, from the quiet work behind the scenes to the bigger moments of celebration, this is all part of the ministry of St Leonard's Church.

**So come and see.
Come and join in.
Come and belong.**

We're so glad you're here.

With every blessing,
Gail

St Leonard's Summer Fete

Saturday 5 July 2025



As it has for decades, St Leonard's Summer Fete will take place on the first Saturday in July.

The theme for this year is flowers so we can look forward to colourful displays on the stalls.

Many of our traditional stalls will be there: the ever popular bottle stall, prize a time, plants, children's games, tombola, stained glass, and of course the refreshments with delicious homemade cakes will be available in the Tapestry Room.

Parking will be at Beoley Village Hall and there will be a minibus shuttle service to the church.

Your Help is Needed

Volunteers are needed for the following:

- Tidying the churchyard:
 - Monday 30 June
 - Tuesday 1 July
 - Possibly Wednesday 2 July
- Putting up marquee and gazebos
 - Thursday 3 July
 - Friday 4 July
- Fete Day - 5 July
 - Setting up stalls from 9:00
 - Packing away from 4:30

Sorting and storing marquees etc on Sunday and Monday

Ros Prentice

ST LEONARD'S CHURCH, BEOLEY

SUMMER FÊTE

SATURDAY 5 JULY

1.30-4.30 PM FREE ENTRY!

GAMES | CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

REFRESHMENTS | STALLS

ENTERTAINMENT | PRIZE DRAW

St Leonard's Grand Draw

Phil Mitchell



We are busy preparing for St. Leonard's Summer Fete which is so popular with our local community and an important contributor to funds which help us to meet the ever increasing costs of maintaining our beautiful church and supporting our work in the local community.

The Grand Draw, which takes place at the Fete, makes a huge contribution to the financial success of the Fete and its receipts act as an important 'insurance' against bad weather.

We are fortunate and amazed every year by the number and range of prizes which are donated by church members and by sponsors - local firms, shops and businesses - who very generously donate cash and gifts for the Draw.

We plan to distribute Grand Draw tickets - in church, posted or by hand - to church members from Sunday 25 May.

We should be most grateful if you could help to make the Church Fete a success, by selling the tickets to family, friends and work colleagues. They are £1 each and there are five tickets in each book.

Our target again this year is to sell 3,000 tickets, and to raise £3,000! If you are able to sell more than the tickets enclosed, please do contact us (details below) so that we can provide you with more.

Please return the counterfoil stubs, with the money for the tickets, if possible by Sunday 29th June. Cheques should be made payable to 'St Leonard's Church'. They can be posted, delivered or handed to us, left in the box in church - or, by arrangement, collected.

We would be grateful if unsold tickets can be returned as soon as possible to us to be re-circulated or to be sold on the day.

Thank you so much in anticipation of your willingness to help St. Leonard's in this way.

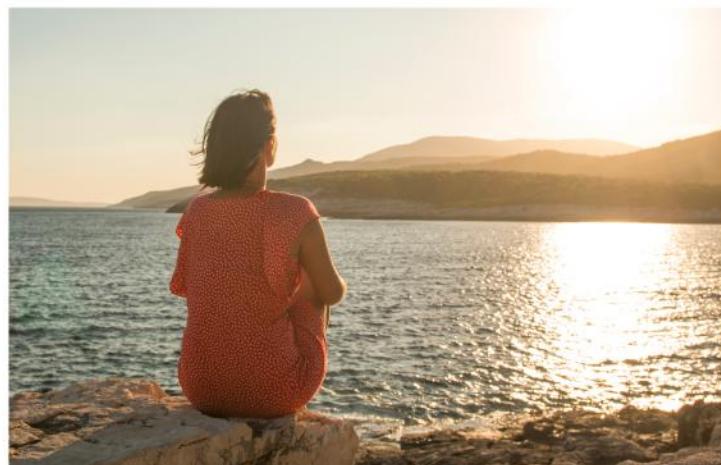
Grand Draw Organiser

*Mr Phil Mitchell, 60 Jersey Close, Church Hill North, Redditch, B98 9LT
Tel. 01527 63385 E-Mail: mitchell842@hotmail.com*

A Time to Reflect, A Time to Renew

The Summer Fete

A New Direction

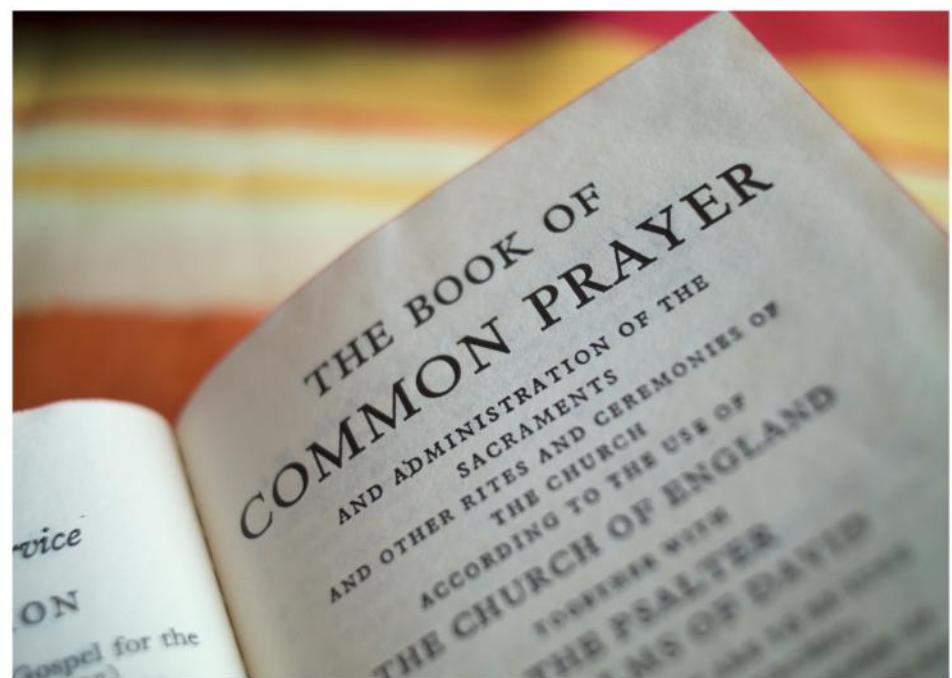


All Are Welcome
Tuesday 5th August
7pm in the Tapestry Room.

Come and join an open and honest conversation about the future of our summer fete—rooted in gratitude for what has been, and alive to the possibilities of what might come next.

Revd Gail

What is the Book of Common Prayer?



If you've ever wondered what a "Book of Common Prayer" (BCP) Communion service is, here's a simple guide.

The BCP service is a traditional form of Anglican worship that has been used for centuries. The language is poetic and reverent, with phrases that have shaped Christian worship in England since 1662. It offers a sense of peace, rhythm, and reflection.

In this service, we follow a set pattern of prayers, Bible readings, a short sermon, and the sharing of bread and wine (Holy Communion).

The words might sound more formal than modern services, but they are rich in meaning – and many people find comfort and depth in their familiarity.

Everyone is welcome to attend, whether you take Communion or simply want to sit, listen, and soak in the quiet beauty of the service. It usually lasts about 30-40 minutes and is often followed by a chance to chat over tea or coffee.

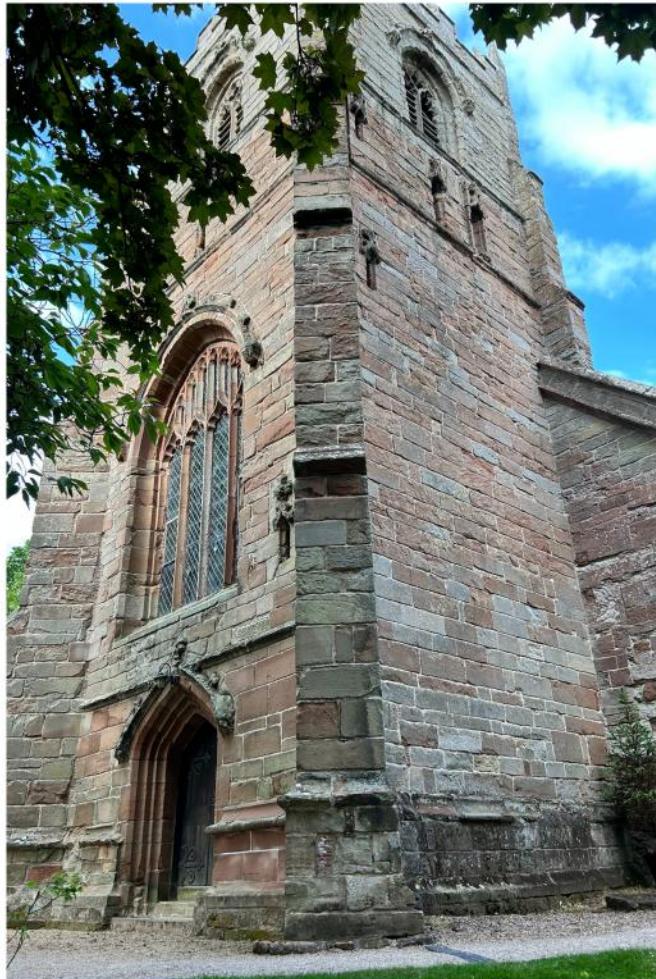
If you're looking for a peaceful, prayerful space, or want to experience the deep roots of our worship tradition, why not come along?

The Bells of St Leonard's

Robin Simmons Tower Captains

For more than 400 years, the sound of a bell has called people to worship at St. Leonard's Church. As the years have passed, the number of bells in the tower has increased from three to six and, more recently, to eight. During this time, the bells have been rung to mark celebrations and also more solemn occasions as well as to announce Divine Services to the Congregation.

To begin with, the original bells were probably just chimed (in the same way that the 'Five Minute Bell' rings on its own prior to today's Services). A rope attached to a lever on the headstock of the bell would allow it to sound by being swung from side to side.



As the 17th Century progressed, a wheel replaced this lever and lead to the ringers being able to control a bell in the way you see us ring prior to a Sunday Service today.

The first known reference to bells in our tower comes from an 'Inventory of Worcestershire Church Goods' in 1552, carried out by John Russell and William Sheldon. They record 'ijj bells in the steeple'. Three bells was the usual number permitted for a Parish Church at that time. However, these pre-date the existing bells by about 50 years, so it is most likely that the original ones were broken up and recast to create our present 17th Century bells.

Our oldest bell, which is also the heaviest (known as the Tenor), dates from 1601. It was cast by Hugh Watts of Leicester and weighs just over half a ton. It is inscribed with the names 'Rafe Sheldon Esquier' and 'William Harper Nicholas Carlton'. The latter two gentlemen were the Churchwardens of the day.

It is possible (but we have no proof) that these oldest three bells were cast nearby, maybe even in the churchyard, as transporting heavy bells over a distance on unmetalled roads would have been very difficult.

The Bell which is now Number Six is the next oldest. It is inscribed with what can only be described as an advertisement: 'Be Yt Known To All That Doth Me See That Newcombe of Leicester Made Mee 1611'. A bellfounder declaring his confidence in his own handiwork! In other towers, there are bells with inscriptions that compare the bellfounder's "improvements" with the skills of the man who cast the bell it replaced.

Number Four is the third of our 17th Century Bells. It bears the names of Edward and R. Sheldon. If you look carefully at Edward Sheldon's tomb in the Chapel, you will see a bell carved upon it to acknowledge the fact that he was responsible for placing bells in our tower. This bell was cast by Henry Oldfield of Nottingham in 1622, it is the only example of his work in Worcestershire. On its waist is cast the Coat of Arms of King James I.

For the next 100 years, these bells called the faithful to worship and also marked significant events. Several payments were made to the Ringers which were recorded in the Parish Accounts. In 1662, 6/- (30p) was paid 'to the ringers on the King's Birthday'. In 1684, 'when His Majesty (James II) was proclaimed', they were paid 3/- (15p).



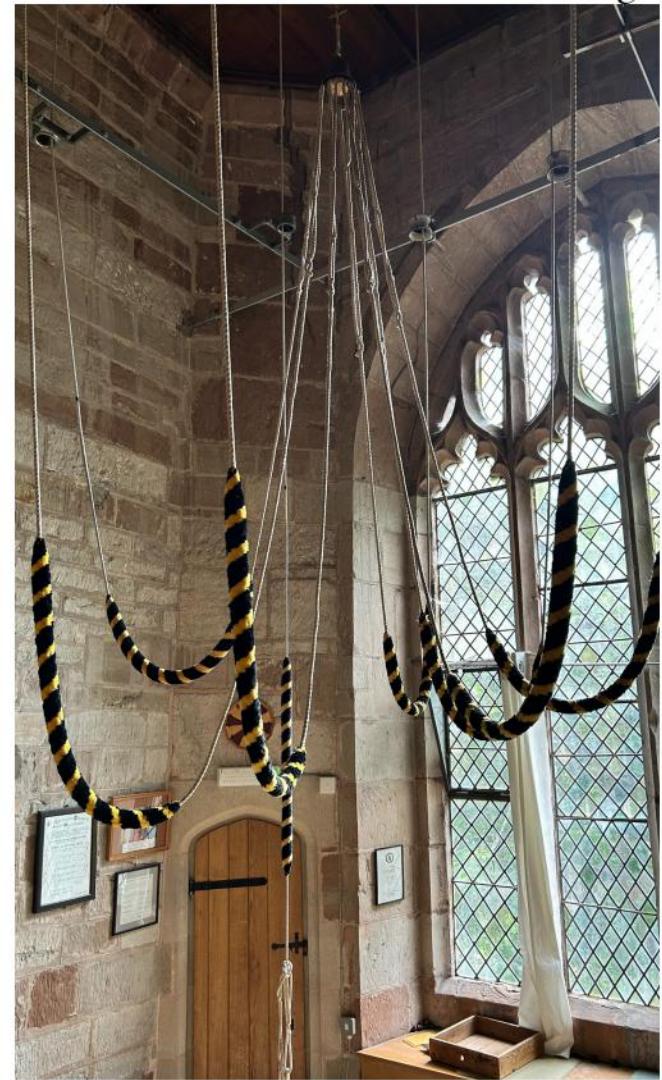
At the turn of the 18th Century, the Art of Change Ringing began to become popular with the Landed Gentry. This involved ringing bells by changing the order in which they were rung. The advent of the wheel (attached to the headstock) made this possible, but only having three bells really limited how many different orders that could be rung. More bells meant more combinations - and Beoley weren't going to be left behind!

In the early 1700s, three bells were cast by Richard Sanders of Bromsgrove. Sanders carried out his trade in Foundry Yard located at the rear of The Queen's Head Public House, The Strand. Number Three (cast 1708) and Number Five (1709) still survive and both bear the names of the Churchwardens John Whateley and James Ford. Bell Number Seven probably did too, but at some point after it was made (in 1711), it was broken up and recast by John Rudhall of Gloucester in 1798. It bears the names of the Wardens of the day, (Wm Pitt and Thomas Winterton)

For the next 200 years, these were the bells that hung in the tower. They were in a wooden frame and were rung from the ground floor. During this time, they were either chimed or rung for Church Services. Actually ringing the bells full-circle seemed to be a seasonal thing, as the Ringers commenced this on each November 5th. This seems a bit ironic considering the Sheldons, who had paid for most of these bells, were practising Catholics! The wooden bellframe was completely restored in 1895, but by the 1920s, it was beginning to show signs of wear and just prior to World War II, ringing became limited to Major Festivals only. However, during the War, Beoley Bells were broadcast to the Nation on Christmas Day 1943.

Immediately after the War ended, under the leadership of Rev. Leonard Birch, funds were raised to rehang the bells in a cast-iron and steel frame. At that time, a suggestion was made to augment the bells to an eight, but the cost (£113-0-0) was deemed to be too much. Fortunately for us, the new frame was designed in a way that two extra bells could be added easily if the opportunity ever arose.

In 1996, as the Millennium approached, the Ringers decided that this would be a good time to complete what had been mooted back in 1948. However, this time the funds required for the project would be in the region of £15,000! Following fundraising efforts, on 12th March 1999, the two new trebles (lightest bells in a ring) were cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London. The following October, Rev. Glyn Dew (Curate) baptised the bells 'St. Leonard' and 'St. Andrew' (reflecting our links to the Methodists on Church Hill). As well as their names, they both bear the inscription 'To the Glory of God AD 2000'.



The bells were rung as an Octave for the first time as the new Millennium commenced at midnight (prior to) 1st January 2000.

From the Gunpowder Plot to the 80th Anniversary of VE Day, the bells have called out to the Parish to remind people of the presence of St. Leonard's in their midst. However, whilst the bells seem to be ever-present, their ringers continue to grow older. We are always seeking to train new ringers to ensure this tradition continues. If you feel you might like to 'have-a-go', please speak to one of the Ringers, or just turn up on Practice Night (Thursday 7:30pm). Who knows...you could soon make the claim that "I 'play' a musical instrument in a heavy metal band"!

Who is Rose?

Rose Akeroyd



My husband, Rob, my father and I moved to Redditch in July 2020 in between lockdowns at the start of the Covid era. It was quite an experience as we had two houses to pack up and my father had lived in his house with my mother since 1957. Lots of decluttering to do. As many of you will remember, we then went into a series of lockdowns when so much just stopped happening – including going to church. So we found ourselves in a new area we had never expected to move to and we had lots of time to explore all the closed places!

I spent time thinking about my church life and what it might be like in the future. I drove past St Leonard's a few times on forays out into the countryside and was always intrigued by the signpost at the top of the hill. One day I turned into the car park and arrived just as some of the ladies of the church were emerging from a meeting, early afternoon.

*That's quite a question!
How do we define ourselves?
What might people want to know?
What might I want to divulge?*

Let's see..

And that was it until Easter 2022 when I decided that St Leonard's would be the first place I would go to worship in Redditch. And I have been worshipping there for three years now.

About a year ago, I decided, with encouragement from Revd. Gail to find out about how I could renew my Reader's Licence (LLM) to be part of the Worship team at St Leonard's.

I had been licensed as a Reader to serve in the Parish of St Hilda, Warley Woods in the Diocese of Birmingham in 2012, but had to resign when we moved house.

I had spent a goodly amount of time in Birmingham Diocese supporting churches and organisation in their quests to become Dementia Friendly. This had partly come about because my mother was living with dementia and I felt my experiences with her could be useful for other people.

St Hilda's was always our family church and I was baptised there in the 1950s, so going to a different church was a very big step.

I am pleased to say that, although it took some time to settle into life at St Leonard's, and I am still learning, it feels that it is absolutely the right place for me to be, and I hope that you all come to appreciate this as time goes by.

8 June 2025, Pentecost Sunday

This is the date of my relicensing when one of the Warden of Readers from Worcester Diocese will come to St Leonard's to present me with my new license.

This will be a joint service at St Leonard's with members of the congregation from St Laurence's, to start at 10.30 am.

This will be followed by a Shared Lunch when you are invited to bring a small amount of food with you to share with others.

Pentecost Sunday is such a lovely day to do this as we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Disciples and I hope that you will be able to attend what will be, for me in particular, a very special day.



ALL TOGETHER PENTECOST

ST LEONARD'S CHURCH, BEOLEY
SUNDAY 8TH JUNE, 10:30AM

Join us for Spirit filled worship with Holy Communion

As part of our Pentcost celebrations
Rose Akeroyd will be licensed as Lay Minister

Our worship and celebrations will continue
with a Shared Lunch

St Laurence Church, Alvechurch and St Leonard's Church, Beoley
worshipping God together.

Photography Competition

Winners Anounced

The Snowdrop Weekend photography competition attracted entries from all ages, in both the Junior and Senior sections.

The competition was judged by Dennis Moore. Each winner received a £20 Amazon voucher and a framed photograph of St Leonard's.



Junior Section Winner
Wilfred Quick aged 3

Senior Section Winner
Gordon Rodgers



20 July - Healing Eucharist Shared Lunch & Moving Forward Together

This will be the date when I hope many of us will be able to come together to share our ideas about how St Leonard's is viewed by the local community and how we would like to present our loving, caring and compassionate church community to everyone around us.

The Healing Eucharist will give us the opportunity to use prayers, songs and readings to address our need for healing, as demonstrated by the ministry of Jesus. If we wish we can be anointed and prayed for, or we can partake in praying for others who are seeking the healing presence of God. This is a powerful way of being part of the loving and caring community of our church.

This will then lead into a shared lunch where you are invited to bring a small contribution to a meal for the congregation and anyone else who might like to attend at around 12.15pm



After lunch, at about 1.30pm, we will move into an activity we have been talking about in the Communications Group of the DCC where we want to start thinking about a new logo for St Leonard's to replace the hastily created one of a few years ago.

We want a logo that will present St Leonard's in the way we want it to be seen. And we want your ideas following prayer and sharing of information at this session.

We hope that those who have worshipped at 9.15 am will come back to join us for lunch and/or the Moving forward together logo session at 1.30 pm, to finish at 3.30pm.

This thinking about a logo session will be a creative and prayerful occasion in which we can float all our ideas in a big pool to take forward in our quest for our new logo.

I am very excited about this project as I see it as a way for us to consider where we are going thoughtfully and prayerfully, getting to know each other a little better along the way.

Please come if you can.

Rose Akeroyd

PRAYERS AND ANOINTING FOR HEALING AND WHOLENESS

Healing Eucharist

St Leonard's Church,

Beoley

Sundays at 11.15am

19th January

16th March

18th May

20th July

21st September

16th November

18th January

19th April

21st June

St Laurence Church,

Alvechurch

Sundays at 11.15am

23rd February

27th April

22nd June

24th August

26th October

28th December

22nd February

24th May

26th July



TICKETS
£5

YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR
ANNUAL

STRAWBERRY TEA

ENJOY A DELICIOUS
AFTERNOON TEA
CELEBRATING STRAWBERRIES
FEATURING
SCONES, CAKES AND DESSERTS

MONDAY 28TH JULY

1PM-3PM

ST LEONARD'S CHURCH
CHURCH HILL
BEOLEY

Strawberry Tea



Strawberry tea parties date back to the 19th Century - there is even one mentioned in Jane Austen's novel 'Emma'. They often took place as fundraising events for churches.

However there were public strawberry tea gardens which ran as businesses and these might have been quite lively places.

There is a road in Kings Norton (Pinehurst Drive) where a restrictive covenant, dating from the late 19th Century, specifically prohibits property owners from opening a Strawberry Tea Garden!

Everyone is welcome at the annual Strawberry Tea at St Leonard's organised by Beoley MU.

It truly is a celebration of all things strawberry: scones with jam and cream, cakes laden with strawberries, desserts and even drinks.

In addition to the delicious food there will be stalls and a raffle.

Tickets costing £5 per person can be bought in advance from Ros Prentice on 07368 638125, or just turn up on the day.

There is no charge for accompanying children so if you have any children or grandchildren, why not bring them along.

Come along and join in this traditional summer event.

Church@4 – Café Worship for Everyone

*First Sunday of the Month, 4pm
Willow Trees YMCA Community Centre*



At Church@4, there's no need to dress up, have all the answers, or even be sure what you believe. Just come as you are.

On the first Sunday of every month, we gather at the Willow Trees YMCA Community Centre at 4pm for a relaxed and welcoming café-style worship. We begin with food—real food, free of charge, shared around tables. It's amazing how much conversation, and connection can begin over something simple like a cuppa or a slice of cake.

Church@4 is for everyone:

All ages, all stages. People of faith, people with questions, people who aren't sure what they think, and people simply looking for friendship.

Each month we explore a Bible story together and respond in a way that suits you. You might join in with a simple craft activity, talk things over with others at your table, reflect quietly, or even try something creative. There's music and a short time of prayer too—but always in a way that invites, never pressures.

You're free to take part in whatever way feels right for you. Whether you're 5 or 95, extroverted or quiet, new to church or have been going all your life—there's space for you here. Everyone is welcome, everyone is valued.





A Growing Community Needs Growing Support

Over the past three months, we've seen a steady rhythm of familiar faces and a growing number of newcomers.

There's something about the warmth of Church@4—its simplicity, its openness—that keeps people coming back. And when members of our wider church family have been there to lend a hand or simply be present, the whole atmosphere lifts. People feel safe. Known. Seen.

We're looking to grow our team and would love more hands, hearts, and voices involved. Could you:

- Offer a warm smile as a welcomer on the door?
- Help prepare or serve refreshments?
- Be a buddy to sit with someone new so they don't feel alone?
- Join our small planning and leading team?

Even coming along simply to be part of the community makes a huge difference. Your presence matters.

We believe Church@4 is becoming a significant space—where faith is gently explored, friendships are formed, and people encounter something of God's love. But we can't sustain it with just the few holding it together right now.

So we ask for your continued prayers—
For the strength and sustainability of the team.
For deeper belonging to take root.
For growth that flows not from numbers, but from real connection.

**Church@4 is a place of hope.
Let's keep building it—together.**

But like all good things, Church@4 doesn't run on its own.
We need help to keep it going.



A Prayer for Church@4

*Loving God,
Thank you for the community of
Church@4.
Bless everyone who comes—
those who are searching,
those who are serving,
and those just finding their place.
Give strength to the team, warmth in
every welcome, and joy around each
table.
Help this to be a place where
friendship grows, and your love is
shared.
Amen.*

Just For Children



Acts 2:1-21

Peter and the disciples are given amazing gifts by the Holy Spirit to share with others on the day of Pentecost.



The crowd are amazed to hear about God in their own languages.



Match the words and images of how the Holy Spirit appears.



DOVE



FLAME



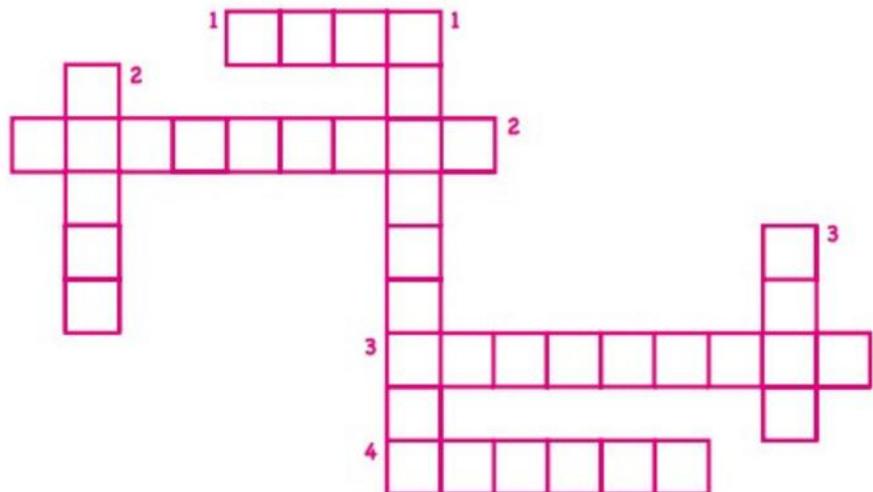
WIND



WATER

Write

Complete the Pentecost crossword using the clues given.



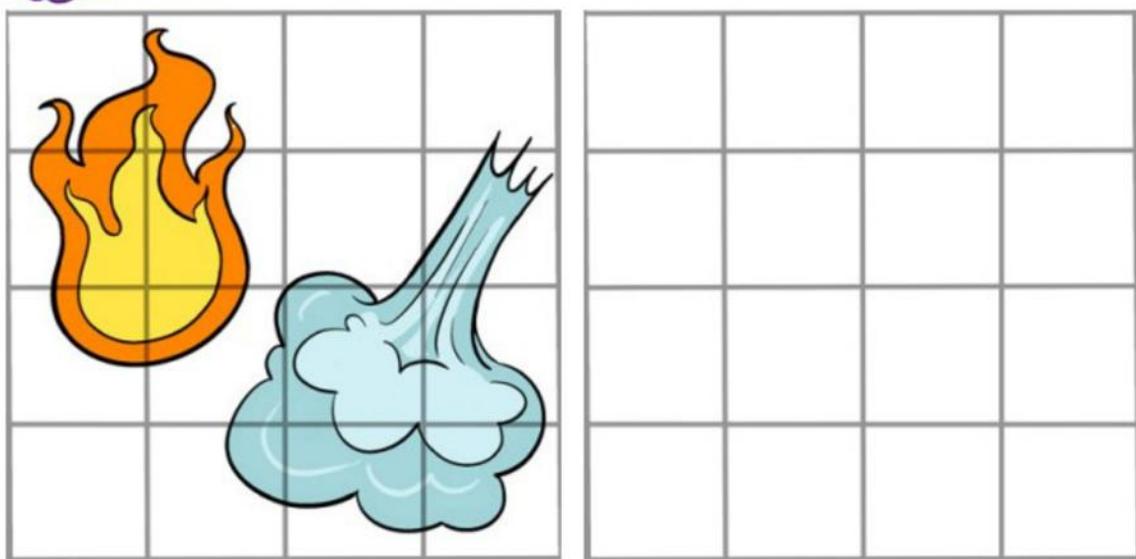
Down:

1. Jesus' followers were called _____ (9)
2. The disciple called _____ spoke to the people (5)
3. An Old Testament prophet called _____ prophesied the events of that day (4)

Across:

1. 4 squares: Suddenly there was a sound like a roaring _____ (4)
2. 9 squares: It was the day of _____ (9)
3. 9 squares: They were suddenly able to speak in different _____ (9)
4. 6 squares: God shared the Holy _____ that day (6)

Copy the symbols of the Holy Spirit as closely as possible in the grid.



Childrens' Competition

Get Creative for St Leonard's Summer Fete!

JOIN OUR STAINED GLASS WINDOW DESIGN COMPETITION AND LET YOUR IMAGINATION SHINE!

Create your own unique design – anything that inspires you!

Prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place –
each winner will receive a beautiful stained-glass decoration to
take home!

The 1st place winner's design will be transformed into a stunning
A4 stained glass piece to keep forever!

Winners announced at 3pm on the day of the fete!

Don't miss your chance to see your artwork come to life.



Photography Social Evening

June 12 19:30

Following on from the successful evening last year, Dennis Moore has again arranged a photography evening social event.

Members of a local photography group have spent time in the church and grounds taking many beautiful and interesting pictures.

Dennis has assembled these into a slide show which is open for anyone to attend.

The evening will start at 19:30 in St Leonard's Church, and be followed by coffee and cake in the Tapestry Room.

Come along and join us for an enjoyable social evening and see the church and grounds in new ways.



A Birmingham Sword Maker at Booley Hall

Felicity and Philippa McWilliams

On 12 June 1875, a man named Robert Mole was buried in the churchyard at St Leonard's Church, Beoley. Still a relatively young man of 45, he left behind his wife, Fanny, and their ten surviving children. Robert and his family lived at Beoley Hall, having moved in 1862 from their former home in Handsworth, Birmingham.

The 1870 Imperial Gazetteer described him as 'Capt R. Mole', and on his death Robert left a fortune of £14,000, which is equivalent today to around £875,000. This was clearly a wealthy man but he was not an aristocrat; where had he come from, how did he end up in Beoley, and how had the family made their money?



Beoley Hall as shown on the Ordnance Survey Worcestershire Sheet XVI SE, 1883.
Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland, CC BY 4.0:
<https://maps.nls.uk/>



1885 Robert Mole and Son sword on display
at Thinktank Science Museum.
Image courtesy of Felicity McWilliams

The story begins in the German city of Solingen, in the 17th century. Known as the 'City of Blades', it was famous for its hollow sword blades, which were both light and strong. In the 1680s, a small group of Solingen swordsmiths took their families and trade secrets to a new life in Shotley Bridge, County Durham. It's not clear whether they were fleeing Germany or invited to Britain; [an article by Northern Echo journalist Chris Lloyd](#) sets out some of the theories but we do know that one of those swordsmiths was a man named Hermann Mohl. By the early 19th century, his descendants had anglicised their surname to Mole and had moved to Birmingham, likely drawn as many others were at the time by the town's growing reputation as a centre of skill in the metalworking trades.



The South-West Prospect of Birmingham 1829
by Frederick Calvert.

Photo by
Birmingham Museums Trust,
licensed under CCO

Beoley's Robert Mole was born in 1829 in Little Charles Street, Birmingham and was baptised two years later in the parish church of St Philip, now Birmingham Cathedral. He spent his youth learning his father's trade as a sword cutter, living at the family home in Islington (an area at the end of Broad Street now known as Five Ways). The family company, Robert Mole and Sons, flourished in Birmingham, winning lucrative orders from the Board of Ordnance, East India Company, the colonial government in India, and the War Office. As well as swords they produced other edged weapons at their Granville Street factory including bayonets, lances, javelins and - in vast numbers - machetes for use in the sugar plantations of the Caribbean.

The 1860s - the decade that Robert Mole moved his large young family to Beoley Hall - was particularly profitable for the company: it had won a contract to supply swords to the Confederate forces in the American Civil War. The southern states had limited industrial capacity to supply their own military and Robert Mole was just one of a number of British manufacturers whose arms and other products were sent on blockade runs past the Union navy to reach Confederate ports. A quick internet search quickly throws up dozens of Birmingham-made swords in museum and private hands in the US, often stamped with Robert Mole and Sons alongside the name of confederate importation magnates such as Courtney & Tennent of Charleston, South Carolina. It's hard to find evidence of Robert Mole's personal social and political views regarding slavery in the US south and elsewhere, but it's at the least clear that he was perfectly willing to do business with the confederacy.

Moving to Beoley and taking on the possession and management of Beoley Hall and its estate shows just how profitable the business had become. In progressive censuses his profession is listed first as 'Sword Cutter', then 'Manufacturer of Swords' and then in 1871, at Beoley, as 'Manufacturer and Landowner'. That same census shows that living with the family at the Hall were four domestic servants, not to mention the numerous other families living and working on the estate including a farm bailiff and gardener, coachman and labourers.

Though he moved to the country, he continued to contribute to the development of his home city. He is listed as a Subscriber to Birmingham's Queen's Hospital, and was a Captain and then Major in the Birmingham Battalion of Rifle Volunteers. After Robert's death the family and company continued in this spirit by the donation of a wide range of Robert Mole and Sons swords to the newly created Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery in and after 1885. By this time, the Wymann's Commercial Encyclopaedia reported that Robert Mole and Sons was turning out 20,000 swords a year and 'a thousand dozen of matchets [machetes] in a single week'.

Robert was later joined in his resting place in the churchyard by his son William Henry Mole in 1884, his wife Fanny in 1893, and another of their sons Percy in 1906.

William Henry and Percy's shared headstone leaves interesting hints to the ongoing story of the family; William Henry died aged only 26 in Panama. Was he in the region on business related to the company's production of machetes for plantations in the Caribbean and elsewhere?

Further research might bring answers, and we'd love to hear from anyone who might know.

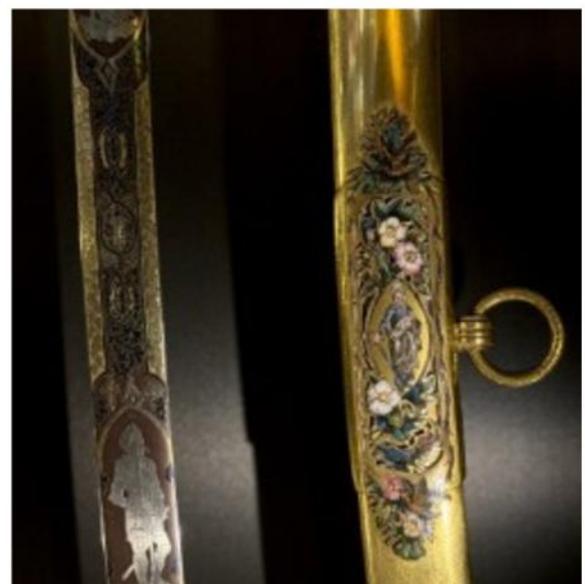
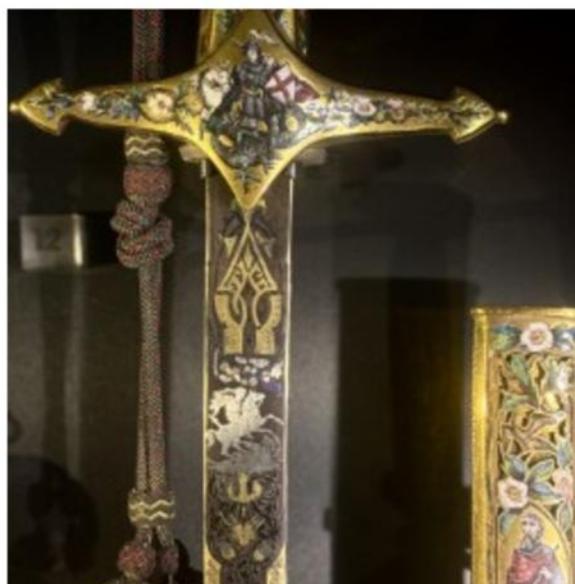


Gravestone Image Courtesy of Ray Moore

We'll continue to explore the story of Robert Mole and Sons, so keep an eye out in subsequent issues of Common Ground for updates and hopefully other stories from the history of the parish.

In the meantime, if the story of this Birmingham-born Beoley-residing sword and machete maker has piqued your interest, you might like to know that you can see some of the company's products on display at two of Birmingham's Museums: Thinktank Science Museum and Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

Our favourite is this stunning gilt enamel sword, made in 1885. The blade and sheath are decorated with depictions of seven national patron saints amalgamated by medieval legend into a group referred to as the 'Seven Champions of Christendom': St George (England), St Andrew (Scotland), St Patrick (Ireland), St David (Wales), St Denis (France), St James the Great (Spain) and St Anthony (Portugal).



1885 Robert Mole and Son sword on display at Thinktank Science Museum.
Images courtesy of Felicity McWilliams

News from the Eco Group

David Lloyd



A Rocha is a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world and committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment.

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

Eco Church is our way of helping to reduce our carbon footprint at St Leonards within the church, and in our daily lives in the outside world.

Our Eco Church group have so far achieved the A Rocha Bronze and now, Silver awards. So , let us go for Gold!!!

This will not be easy to achieve, but we will be helping to improve our environment, both in church and outside in our daily lives. We will also be helping God's Earth to combat the damage which has been caused by the human race. Flora and fauna and all life on the planet is affected by the bad state that things have got into, most of which is down to human activity. Instead of looking after the Earth, as God asked us.

The human race seems to be doing it's best to inflict as much damage as possible on land, sea and air. Climate change is affecting the weather, the food we eat, and the water we drink. Eco church is one way we can help to lessen the effects of this.

Filling in certain questions in the new version of the Eco Church questionnaire will mean the involvement of members of the congregation.

New members of the Eco Church group are very welcome.

For more information, please contact David Lloyd – tel 01527 455883



Church Calendar

Date	Place	Time	Event
4 May	St Leonard	09:15	Informal Worship
		11:15	Morning Worship
	Willow Trees	16:00	Church@4
10 May	St Leonard's	09:00	Churchyard Working Party
11 May	St Leonard's	09:15	Informal Worship
		11:15	Morning Worship
12 May	Tapestry Room	10:00	Craft and Chat
17 May	Bellringers' Outing - Arrive St John the Baptist Fladbury 09:30		
18 May	St Leonard's	10:00	ADCM & Worship Followed by Shared Lunch
19 May	Tapestry Room	12:30	Beoley MU Meeting
24 May	St Leonard's	09:00	Churchyard Working Party
25 May	St Leonard's	09:15	Informal Worship
		11:15	Morning Worship
27 May	Tapestry Room	10:30	Friendship Group



Church Calendar

Date	Place	Time	Event
1 June	St Leonard's	09:15	Team Worship
		11:15	Holy Communion
	Willow Trees	16:00	Church@4
2 June	Tapestry Room	10:00	Craft and Char
5 June	St Leonard's	10:00	BCP Holy Communion
7 June	St Leonard's	9:00	Churchyard Working Party
8 June	St Leonard's	10:30	Pentecost All Together Service with St Laurence
12 June	Tapestry Room	12:30	Beoley MU Invitation Event
12 June	St Leonard's	19:30	Photography Social Evening
15 June	St Leonard's	09:15	Informal Worship
		11:15	Holy Communion
21 June	St Leonard's	09:00	Churchyard Working Party
22 June	St Leonard's	09:15	Informal Worship
		11:15	Morning Worship
23 June	Tapestry Room	12:30	Beoley MU Meeting
24 June	Tapestry Room	10:30	Friendship Group
29 June	St Leonard's	08:00	BCP
		10:30	Shared Worship Holy Communion
30 June	St Leonard's	Any Time	Pre-Fete Churchyard Tidying



Church Calendar

Date	Place	Time	Event
1 July	St Leonard's	Any Time	Pre-Fete Churchyard Tidying
3 July	St Leonard's	10:00	BCP Holy Communion
3 & 4 July	St Leonard's	18:30	Putting up marquees and gazebos
5 July	St Leonard's	08:00 Onwards	Fete Set up
		13:30	Fete Opens
6 July	St Leonard's	09.15	Team Worship
		11.15	Holy Communion
	Willow Trees	16:00	Church@4
7 July	Tapestry Room	10:00	Craft and Char
13 July	St Leonard's	09:15	Informal Holy Communion
		11:15	Morning Worship
19 July	St Leonard's	09:00	Churchyard Working Party
20 July	St Leonard's	09:15	Healing Eucharist
		11:15	Healing Eucharist
		12:15	Shared Lunch
		13:30	Moving Forward Together Workshop
28 July	Tapestry Room	13:00	Strawberry Tea
29 July	Tapestry Room	10:30	Friendship Group

Looking Ahead



**A time to reflect, a time to renew:
the summer fete, a new direction**
5 August
19:30 Tapestry Room



St Laurence Heritage Day
13 September



Harvest Worship
12 October

Harvest Supper
Friday 17 October
The Ark



Commemoration of the Departed
Saturday 1 November



**St Leonard's Feast Dine Out
Together**
Thursday 6 November
Put the date in your diary
More details in the next magazine



Quiz & Chips at The Ark
Friday 7 November

Looking Ahead

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Rememberance Day Service

Sunday 9 November



St Leonard's Christmas Market & Festival

Saturday 6 December

Crafters Wanted!

Do you know any good local makers or craftspeople who would like a stall at a craft fair?

Following a successful trial last year, we are hoping to invite a small number of crafts people to take stalls at the Christmas Market. These stall holders contribute to the event's fundraising through paying a fee rather than donating takings. This will help us to provide a changing and wide range of stalls to attract new visitors to the market.

Please be aware that stalls will be carefully selected to ensure there are no clashes and that products are suitable for the event and our audience. There are also only a limited number of spaces available so we might not be able to say yes to everyone.

If you have any ideas or recommendations for new stallholders, please get in touch with John McWilliams: 07907069434 or jdmcw.home@gmail.com.

Contacts



Church Office:

email: church-beoleyandalvechurch@outlook.com

phone: 0121 447 7955

Open: Tuesday - Thurs. 09:30-13:30



Marriage

Wedding preparation sessions for couples marrying at either St Leonard or St Laurence churches are held at St Leonard's every other Thursday evening between 6pm and 8pm.

Upcoming dates are: May 15th, June 5th, June 19th, July 3rd and July 17th



Baptism

Baptism preparation sessions are held on the first Sunday of every month at 3pm at the

YMCA Willow Trees Community Centre,
Church Hill, B98 9JL



Funerals

Please contact the office using the details above

