

# St. Leonard's Magazine



*Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?  
And who shall stand in his holy place?  
Those who have clean hands and pure hearts.*  
Psalm 24: 3-4

September 2024



# **Beoley, Church Hill & Abbey Park**

**a church in the Redditch Holy Trinity Team Parish**

**Websites:** [www.facebook.com/StLeonardsChurchBeoley/](http://www.facebook.com/StLeonardsChurchBeoley/)

[www.achurchnearyou.com/church/18703/](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/18703/)

[www.holytrinityredditch.org.uk](http://www.holytrinityredditch.org.uk)

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## 2024 Publication Dates

St Leonard's magazine will offer 4 editions throughout 2024, and will be published on the dates below.



If you have any contributions or any items for inclusion, please could these be with the Editor 2 weeks prior to publication. Items can be sent to [jon.bayliffe@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jon.bayliffe@hotmail.co.uk), can be left in Church marked FAO the Editor, St Leonard's Magazine, or sent by post. Additionally please include a name so I know whom to thank!

## The Vicar writes



As summer begins to gracefully bow out and anticipate autumn as it begins to paint the world with its vibrant hues, we find ourselves standing on the threshold of a new academic year. Although so many of us are not within this setting, it is the academic year and its pattern and rhythm that inform much our calendar year too. There is something about this time of the year which feels like a transitional period which invites reflection and anticipation, providing the perfect opportunity to align our hearts and minds with God's wisdom as we embark on new beginnings.

The Bible offers us profound insights into the beauty of change and the importance of seizing new opportunities. Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us, "*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.*" We can take solace in knowing that every season is part of God's perfect plan.

As we prepare for what is ahead, we are reminded of the value of wisdom and knowledge. Proverbs 4:7 advises, "*The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.*" This verse encourages us to prioritize learning and growth, understanding that the pursuit of knowledge is a noble and God-honouring endeavour. Learning isn't just for those within the educational system, being open to learning and growth is part of our everyday living with God.

Autumn, with its crisp air and colourful landscapes, also calls us to a heightened awareness of our role as stewards of God's creation.

Genesis 2:15 tells us, *"The Lord God placed humankind in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."* As we enjoy the natural beauty of this season, let us also commit to caring for the environment.

Eco-awareness can be integrated into our daily lives in various ways. Simple actions like reducing waste, recycling, and conserving energy can make a significant impact. As we grow in wisdom together, learning to be better stewards of God's creation keep a look out in Pews News for tips and ideas.

As we journey through this season, let us reflect on God's unwavering faithfulness, for we do not do any of this alone. Lamentations 3:22-23 reassures us, *"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."* This promise of God's constant presence and care provides us with the strength and courage needed to face new academic challenges and opportunities.

As we step into this new time of transition, let us embrace it with enthusiasm and a commitment to glorifying God in all our endeavours. May we find inspiration in the changing seasons and strive to be diligent stewards of the knowledge we acquire and the world we inhabit.

Rev. Gail

# Exploring Ministry

In the spring we held an Exploring Ministry Day at St Leonard's Church, during this session there were fruitful conversations about ALM and LLM training and discerning a call to other ministries in the church was discussed.

We are repeating this session again, this time we will gathering at

**The Ark, Alvechurch on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September at 10am.**

Is there an area of ministry that you feel you are being called to, this may be something more formal like being ALM or LLM, you may wish to discern a wider calling. It may be that you feel like you are called to collective prayers (intercessions) in worship or read the bible. There are many roles that make up the life of the church and we are always encouraging people to get involved whether it be offering, welcome or hospitality.

Over the last few months, we have had a sign-up sheet in church looking for various roles to be fulfilled, would you like to know more about these? Whatever you are feeling called to, this is your opportunity to come and have an informal chat about it.

Following this session we will be organising training sessions to encourage learning and confidence for all the roles of interest.

# **Bishop John's Farewell**

As I'm sure you are aware, Bishop John will be retiring as Bishop of Worcester at the end of September. He retires after a long and distinguished ministry as a parish priest, cathedral canon, suffragan bishop, member of the House of Lords and the Lord High Almoner, and of course seventeen fruitful years as Bishop of Worcester. He will be greatly missed, not least by myself and all those who have worked closely with him.

There will be an opportunity for us all to gather in the Cathedral and give thanks to God and to Bishop John for all he has given at 4.00pm on Sunday 29 September. In the meantime, if you would like to contribute to a leaving gift, donations can be sent via bank transfer to The Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd, Lloyds Bank, The Cross, Worcester; Sort Code: 30 99 90; Account No: 02974040 (please use the reference BISHOP COLLECTION).

Please also pray for Bishop John and H-J at this time of change, and for God's rich blessing upon them in the next stage of their Christian pilgrimage.

With every good wish,

+ Martin

The Rt Revd Martin Gorick

Bishop of Dudley

July 2024





# Redditch Mission Area Launches with Celebratory Spirit!



## A Vision for Flourishing Churches:

The Redditch Mission Area is more than just a new structure; it's a vision for empowering local churches to flourish and become all that God is calling them to be. This vision is rooted in attentiveness to the Spirit's work in our communities, across Redditch and the surrounding villages. The launch of the Redditch Mission Area marks an exciting new chapter for our churches. It's a call to embrace collaboration, to listen to the Spirit's leading, and to work together to build a brighter future for our communities. Let's celebrate this milestone and look forward to the amazing things that God will do through us as we journey together.



**On a sunny Saturday afternoon**, July 14th, 2024, St John's Church in Greenlands was buzzing with excitement as the High Sheriff of Worcestershire, Charles Moyle, Martin Gorick, the Bishop of Dudley, and Archdeacon Nikki Groarke gathered with 130 people to celebrate a momentous occasion: the official launch of the Redditch Mission Area and the commissioning of Rev Canon Paul Lawlor as its Lead.



**The High Sheriff** took the opportunity to present awards to the Redditch Mission Area for their outstanding work in developing the Redditch Christmas Toy Appeal, a shining example of the power of collaboration within the Mission Area. It was emphasized that the award was for every individual who shares the vision of the Mission Area. It is a testament to the collective effort and commitment to making a real difference in our community.

## Collaboration is Key

The success of the Christmas toy appeal, with every one of the twelve churches contributing, demonstrates the incredible impact that can be achieved when churches work together on larger projects, without sacrificing their individual initiatives. In fact, collaboration strengthens and inspires each church to grow and thrive.

Want to learn more about the Redditch Mission Area and how you can get involved?  
Contact our website: [cofe-redditch.org.uk](http://cofe-redditch.org.uk) Follow our Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/RedditchMissionArea>





Redditch Mission Area

## Quotes of the day!

**Archdeacon Nikki Groarke:**

"The service felt like a significant milestone in our journey towards working more collaboratively in mission across Redditch and the wider area. It was a chance to celebrate how far we have come, and set things in place for the future, in a context of praise and worship – a really joyful afternoon!"



**High Sheriff of Worcestershire Charles Moyles:**

"When all is said and done, the one thing we have left is Community.

Community is our family, our neighbours, our colleagues and our acquaintances. We may not know them intimately, they may not have a faith but regardless – if we can find the time to talk to them, share with them, take time to listen to them, then we will begin to alleviate loneliness and exclusion – through Community we can make every single person feel special and valuable."

**Rev Canon Paul Lawlor:**

It is a privilege to be asked to lead on this exiting initiative. I am passionate that our churches flourish and demonstrate the love of God to the communities they serve. I hope that the Mission Area can help churches to do this each in their own unique way.



**Elaine Whitfield:**

The heart of the Redditch Mission Area is to empower our local churches to flourish, to truly become what God is calling them to be. This means being attuned to the Spirit's work in our communities, across Redditch and our surrounding villages. I believe we are on the cusp of something truly special, a movement of God's Spirit in our midst and I am excited for the future of the Redditch Mission Area and our continued work together.



"It's either an appeal to youth culture  
or we can't afford to service the boiler  
for the Winter season"

# YMCA Worcestershire

For just over a year, I have had the privilege of serving as a trustee for YMCA Worcestershire, an organisation dedicated to supporting young people and



families across Redditch, Worcester, Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest, Wychavon, and the Malvern Hills. Recently, I was entrusted with the role of overseeing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion EDI, a responsibility I hold close to my heart.

Our mission at YMCA is to create a supportive environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and included. The work we do in promoting EDI is essential in building a community that embraces differences and fosters a sense of belonging for all.

At St Leonard's Church, we are embarking on an 18-month journey to explore themes of welcome and inclusion, inspired by resources from 'Inclusive Church'. This commitment, which launches on Sunday, 22nd September, is a testament to our dedication to creating an inclusive community. Through this initiative, we aim to deepen our understanding of inclusion and implement practices that genuinely reflect our commitment to embracing diversity.

This year the YMCA celebrate 180 years of its impactful work, in a recent YMCA trustee meeting, I shared a reflection that encapsulates our vision for EDI. Here is an excerpt from that reflection:

Today as we reflect on the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion within our YMCA community, it is important to anchor our thoughts in the



wisdom of the Bible. I feel that as a Christian organisation the scripture reminds us of the fundamental value and dignity inherent in every individual, of every single person, regardless of their background or status.

In Galatians 3:28, we find a powerful declaration of unity and equality:

"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

This verse calls us to recognise the oneness and equality that we share in Jesus. It urges us to move beyond societal divisions and embrace each person as valued members, not only of our shared humanity but of the body of Christ. In the context of the YMCA, this means fostering an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and included.

In this our 180th year, as we have looked back at our story it is clear to see that this has informed our mission from our very beginnings. It is a story that we have inherited and has continued to inform and enhance all that we do at every level of the organisation.

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul speaks of the Body of Christ as a place of unity in diversity, a diversity that celebrates with equality. And this we are told at verse 18 is God given.

*"God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as God wanted them to be".*

As the YMCA we also speak of equality, this is not just a principle to be admired but a practice to be lived out. It challenges us to confront and dismantle any barriers that may hinder the full participation of any individual. Diversity enriches our community, bringing a variety of perspectives, talents, and experiences that can strengthen our mission and outreach.

And as a practice to be lived out, we must be encouraging an inclusion that goes beyond mere acceptance. Inclusion within the Body of Christ

involves actively engaging and valuing each person's unique contribution, and for us this so often begins with encouraging people to see that they already are deeply loved and valued and owning this for themselves.

As we strive to continue to embody these principles, let us remember the words of James 2:1:

*"My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism."*

For this call to impartiality is a reminder that our actions should reflect the inclusive love of God. As we begin our next 180 years let us re-commit to being a community where everyone, regardless of their differences, can thrive and feel a sense of belonging.

As we move forward, may we draw inspiration from these biblical teachings, committing ourselves to the work of promoting equality, celebrating diversity, and ensuring inclusion in all aspects of our YMCA activities. In doing so, we not only honour the dignity of every individual but also reflect the love and unity that we have been called to embody.

As we look ahead, I conclude by offering this prayer.

Gracious God,

We pray with hearts full of gratitude and joy as we celebrate 180 years of the YMCA's service. We thank you for the vision and dedication of those who have come before us, and for the impact the YMCA has made in communities around the world.

We give thanks and praise for the diversity and uniqueness of all people. We are reminded of your boundless love for each person, regardless of their background, identity, or orientation. Help us to reflect this love in our actions and attitudes, creating a community where everyone feels valued and respected.

As we live out these principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion at all levels of the YMCA, we ask for your guidance and wisdom. Teach us to see each individual as you see them, help us to break down barriers of prejudice and discrimination, fostering an environment where all can thrive.

We pray for the YMCA's ongoing mission. May it continue to be a beacon of hope, support, and transformation in the lives of many. Strengthen the hands and hearts of all who work and volunteer within this organisation. Fill them and us with compassion, perseverance, and the resolve to uphold the values of equality and inclusion in all they do.

Bless us and guide us in your vision and wisdom as we strive to be instruments of your peace and justice. May our efforts reflect your love and grace, drawing us closer together as one Body in Christ.

Amen.

Revd Gail

## Save the date

This year our Christmas Market will be on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December and will be held at YMCA Willow Trees Community Centre.

Save the date and keep a look out for details to how to get involved.



**PRAYERS AND ANOINTING FOR  
HEALING AND WHOLENESS**

# Healing Eucharist

**St Leonard's Church,  
Beoley**

Sundays at 11.15am

15th September  
17th November

2025

19th January  
16th March  
18th May  
20th July  
21st September  
16th November

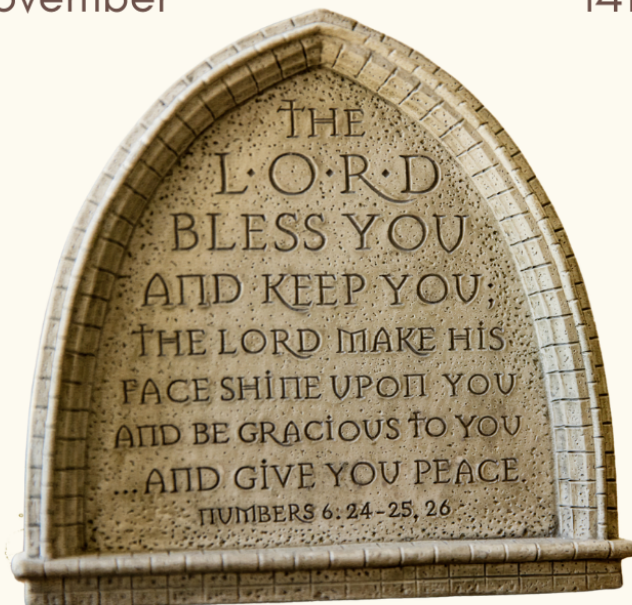
**St Laurence Church,  
Alvechurch**

Sundays at 11.15am

27th October  
22nd December

2025

23rd February  
27th April  
22nd June  
24th August  
26th October  
14th December







# **HARVEST FESTIVAL**

**SUNDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER**

**10.30AM**

**AT**

**ST LEONARD'S CHURCH**

All donations of food will  
support the ministry and work  
of Redditch Food Bank

# Care for Creation

António Guterres (United Nations Secretary-General) has said that we're at 'Code red for humanity: the alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable: greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk.'

At this time of Creationtide, how are we to respond to these climate concerns?

## The world belongs to God:

*'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it'* (Psalm 24:1). The world is not ours, but God's! We are called to share in care for God's world: *'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'* (Genesis 1:28). We represent God by governing with the same self-giving generosity that we see in His creation of the earth. This challenges our consumer mindset, that sees the earth's resources as both limitless and existing simply for our needs. For example, the fashion industry uses as much carbon per minute, as a car emits going six times round the world! How can we make a difference in our world?

## We belong to Christ:

We also belong to the one whose plan is: *'to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.'* (Ephesians 1:10). We can look forward to the time when God will create a new heaven and a new earth and make everything new. Meanwhile, we are called to serve as He serves, caring for the earth and our fellow humans, by living simply, recycling, conserving energy and choosing reusable options.

In terms of our world, there is no plan B! God gave us only one planet!



# Church@4: Bringing Worship to the Community

Church@4 is an intentional new worshipping community of St Leonard's Church, designed to reach people where they are. Meeting once a month at the YMCA Willow Trees Community



Centre, Church@4 offers a unique style of worship that our traditional church building couldn't accommodate. This Café Style church allows us to gather around tables, making activities easier to participate in and fostering a sense of community and belonging.

The format of Church@4 emphasizes fellowship through shared meals. Food and eating with others were significant aspects of Jesus's ministry. Jesus often used meals as opportunities to build relationships and share teachings. For example, in the story of the Last Supper (Luke 22:14-20), Jesus used a meal to institute the new covenant and connect deeply with his disciples. Similarly, by eating together at Church@4, we communicate from the moment people walk in that we value spending time with them, promoting hospitality and belonging. This welcome is part of our worship and reveals the nature of God, who desires to be with us.

After sharing a meal, we move into a time of singing together. We choose songs that are easy to pick up, understanding that attendees may be new to the faith or even uncertain about it. We then hear a Bible story. Currently, we are exploring the 'Big Family of God', beginning with creation and examining Old Testament stories where God has made promises to people and used them for divine plans.

The largest portion of our worship is dedicated to responding to the story. This time is crafted to disciple people of all ages and learning styles. We always include a physical activity and creating something individually or as a table—and questions to discuss. This part of the

worship is lively and can be deep, fun, and collaborative. It invites us to explore together what God might be saying through the Bible story we've heard.

Our worship concludes with more singing and prayer before we are sent out with God's blessing, encouraged to reflect and live out what we have learned.

Church@4 is not for everyone, but it is growing disciples, both old and new. It welcomes people to explore the Christian faith and makes St Leonard's Church present and visible in the community. However, it needs your continued support. We need food and cakes to serve, people to welcome, and most importantly, we need prayer. We are all called to serve the people of this parish in our own unique ways, but we can all pray.

As it says in Philippians 4:6, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Let us come together in prayer to support Church@4 and its mission to bring worship into the community.

In your prayers, please remember Church@4, its attendees, and all those who serve in making this ministry possible. If you are able to be involved in any way please do speak to Revd Gail. Together, we can continue to spread God's love and make disciples in our community.

# St Laurence Church and The Ark Heritage Day

SATURDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2024, 11AM - 3PM



Self led tours of the church and churchyard

Local Community Stalls

Dance demonstration's from  
*Amy Greaves School of dance,*  
*Line Dancing*  
*Tango Unplugged.*

Family Games, Teddy Parachutes and Face Painting

Bournville Boats

Heritage Cars

Crown Meadow First School Choir

Tombola (s)

Local Singer

The Midland Sinfonia

Free Craft Activities

Morris Dancers

Food and refreshments served all day

Afternoon tea (pre-booked only)

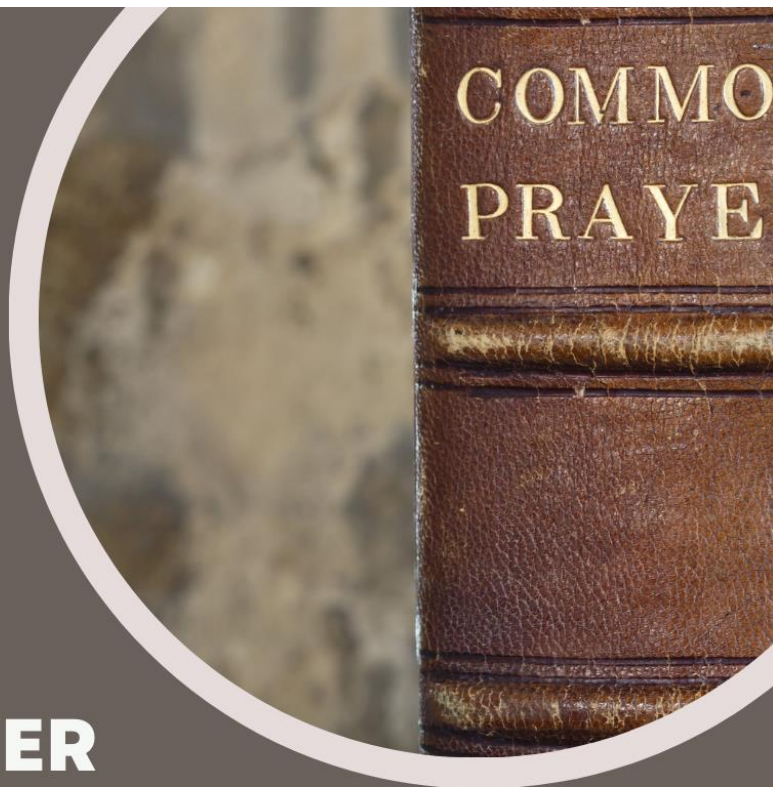
Prize Draw with amazing prizes!



**Contact Charlotte in the office to order Afternoon Tea**



# 10AM HOLY COMMUNION FROM THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER



**ST LEONARD'S,  
BEOLEY**

## **1ST THURSDAY OF MONTH**

September 7th  
October 5th  
November 2nd  
December 7th

2025

January 2nd  
February 6th  
March 6th  
April 3rd  
May 1st  
June 5th  
July 3rd  
August 7th  
September 4th  
October 2nd  
November 6th  
December 4th

**ST LAURENCE,  
ALVECHURCH**

## **3RD WEDNESDAY OF MONTH**

September 20th  
October 18th  
November 15th  
December 20th

2025

January 15th  
February 15th  
March 19th  
April 16th  
May 21st  
June 18th  
July 16th  
August 20th  
September 17th  
October 15th  
November 19th  
December 17th

# **St Leonard's Church, a praying Community**

We are all called to pray, as we encourage each other to do this we offer some prayers for our community that you may wish to use.

## **We Give Thanks:**

Gracious God, we give thanks for St Leonard's Church and for every member of this blessed community.

## **Empower Us:**

Grant us confidence to step out in mission,  
Wisdom to discern your leading,  
Openness to embrace new ideas,  
Courage to let go of what needs to be let go of,  
And a love that overflows from you to us and into the people of Abbey Park, Beoley, and Church Hill.

## **For Growth:**

We pray for growth in our church community.

Bless our gatherings, both at our church building and through Church@4.

May we see:

Numerical growth,

A deepening of discipleship,

An increase in talents and time offered to our church life and ministry.

### **Our Calling:**

Place the calling you have for us, both as a community and as individuals, on our hearts.

Lead us by your Spirit to generously offer our service.

### **For Our Schools:**

As the schools in our parish return after the summer break, may our relationships with them continue to grow and be fruitful. Through "Open the Book" and assemblies led by our clergy, touch the hearts of all who hear, fostering enquiring minds and an openness to embrace the gospel.

### **For Our Churchwardens:**

We lift up our Churchwardens in prayer:

Bless Dennis as he settles into his new role.

Bless Ros as she mentors him.

When Ros steps down next year, we pray that you will place the call of churchwarden on someone's heart. May this person step forward in faith, assured of your will for them and confident in the support of our community.

In Your Name We Pray, **Amen.**

## Let's run with perseverance

*'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race that is marked out for us.'* (Hebrews 12:1)

With the Paris Olympics still so recent, this imagery can really speak to us. The Christian is like a highly trained athlete, and the surrounding 'stadium' is filled with champions and heroes of the past; they watch *US* – and we draw inspiration from *THEM*.

Because we are in training spiritually, it is obvious that every 'sin' is to be treated in the same way as by a modern athlete – for whom drug-taking, indeed any form of cheating or breaking the rules, is out!

But Christ's athletes are also to be careful to shun 'everything that hinders.' The wrong running shoes? A faulty diet? In the Christian's case, if the problem area is not an actual sin, what is it? Why, it is anything that, while in itself may be legitimate, but which nevertheless is a weak point, and 'hinders' progress.

The artist Rubens in the 17<sup>th</sup> century created a painting of Thetis – the mother of Achilles in Greek mythology – dipping her son into the supposedly protective waters of the river Styx. But, because she held him by his heel, this single part of him was untouched by the water. Achilles grew to be a mighty warrior; yet, during a fateful battle, an arrow that pierced his vulnerable heel was the means of his downfall.

The Achilles heel factor affects every single one of us. There comes a moment when those who mean business with Jesus Christ become aware that the Holy Spirit is quietly speaking within: "You're blocking the blessing in your life at this weak spot of yours.... by holding onto this object... by entertaining this objective... by persisting in this relationship... by continuing this activity. *Let it go.*"



What is this 'thing'? No one else can spell it out for us. It is between us and Christ alone. There need be no sudden crisis, no emotional surge. But the thing that 'hinders' is firmly – deliberately – to be discarded; no longer to have any part in our Christian living. And the sunshine of heaven smiles down upon us as we run on....

## REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Join us for a service of remembrance as we gather to remember all who have died in the pursuit of peace during war and conflicts.

**Sunday 10th November**  
**St Leonard's Church at 10.15am**



## Friendship Group

A warm welcome, a listening ear and support for anyone grieving the death of a loved one.

THE LAST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH  
10.30AM, IN THE TAPESTRY ROOM  
AT ST LEONARD'S CHURCH

**For more information contact**  
**Margaret Lloyd**

01527 455883  
[dave4margie@gmail.com](mailto:dave4margie@gmail.com)



St  
Leonard's  
Beoley



# Quiz and Chips

**Friday 8th November**

**7:30pm start, doors open at 7pm**

**The Ark, School Lane, B48 7SB**

Teams of up to 6 people max

£12 per person including fish and chip supper.  
*Veggie option available, please request on booking.*

*Licensed bar on evening.*

*Booking in advance and payment of ticket by  
Monday 4th November.*

*For tickets see Graham or Charlotte in the Parish Office*

## **The world's migrants are mostly Christians**

A new analysis of data by the Pew Research Centre in Washington DC has found that of the more than 280 million people, or 3.6% of the world's population, who are currently international migrants (living outside their country of birth), 47% of them are Christian.

They are followed by Muslims (29% of all living migrants), followed by Hindus (5%), Buddhists (4%) and Jews (1%).

Over the past three decades, the total number of people living as international migrants has increased by 83%, outpacing global population growth of 47%.

The report, 'The Religious Composition of the World's Migrants', is based on an analysis of UN data and 270 censuses and surveys to compare migration data from 1990 and 2020.

The analysis found that in Europe, 56 per cent of migrants are Christian. Muslims make up 18 per cent of migrants in Europe, although they make up only 7 per cent of Europe's overall population. Jews, Hindus and Buddhists make up much smaller shares of European migrant numbers.

The Christian migrants in Europe are most often from Russia, Ukraine, and Poland. Many of the Muslim migrants to Europe were born in Turkey, Syria, Morocco, and Algeria. In Europe, Germany and France have welcomed the most Muslim immigrants.

Jews make up just 0.2 per cent of the world's population, but they account for one per cent of all migrants. This means they are the most likely people in the world to live outside their country of birth. In 2020, one in five Jews had moved from their home country. Israel has 51 per cent of all Jewish migrants, owing to its Law of Return. The US has the second largest population of Jewish migrants, and the UK is the third most common destination for Jewish migrants.

The report observes that: "many migrants have moved to escape religious persecution or to live among people who hold similar religious beliefs."

# Education Sunday

Education Sunday takes place on 8<sup>th</sup> September, as our children return to school after the summer break. It's good opportunity to ask what God thinks of children and how we can reflect this in our schools, churches and families.

*Children are valuable to God:*

*'Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'* (Matthew 19:13-14).

Jesus' action shows the importance of children to God. In many cultures around the world, children are often abused, exploited or disregarded. God is committed to caring and protecting them and calls us to do the same.

*Children need nurture and guidance:*

*'Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.'* (Proverbs 22:6 ESV). Gardeners will often attach plants to a pole or trellis to guide their growth. Children also need solid structure to keep their physical, emotional, social, and spiritual growth on track. We can support them in their growth and development, and we can be a godly example to them.

*Children need discipline:*

*'Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you the delights you desire.'* (Proverbs 29:17). This is not easy and requires the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Discipline is a sign of love, reflecting how God deals with us (Hebrews 12:7). In this way, they'll become adults who fulfil all that the Creator wants them to become.

As Jesus said, *'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me'* (Mark 9:37).



## **Fewer priests ahead?**

The number of people offering themselves for ordination to the Church of England has fallen by 38 per cent since 2020.

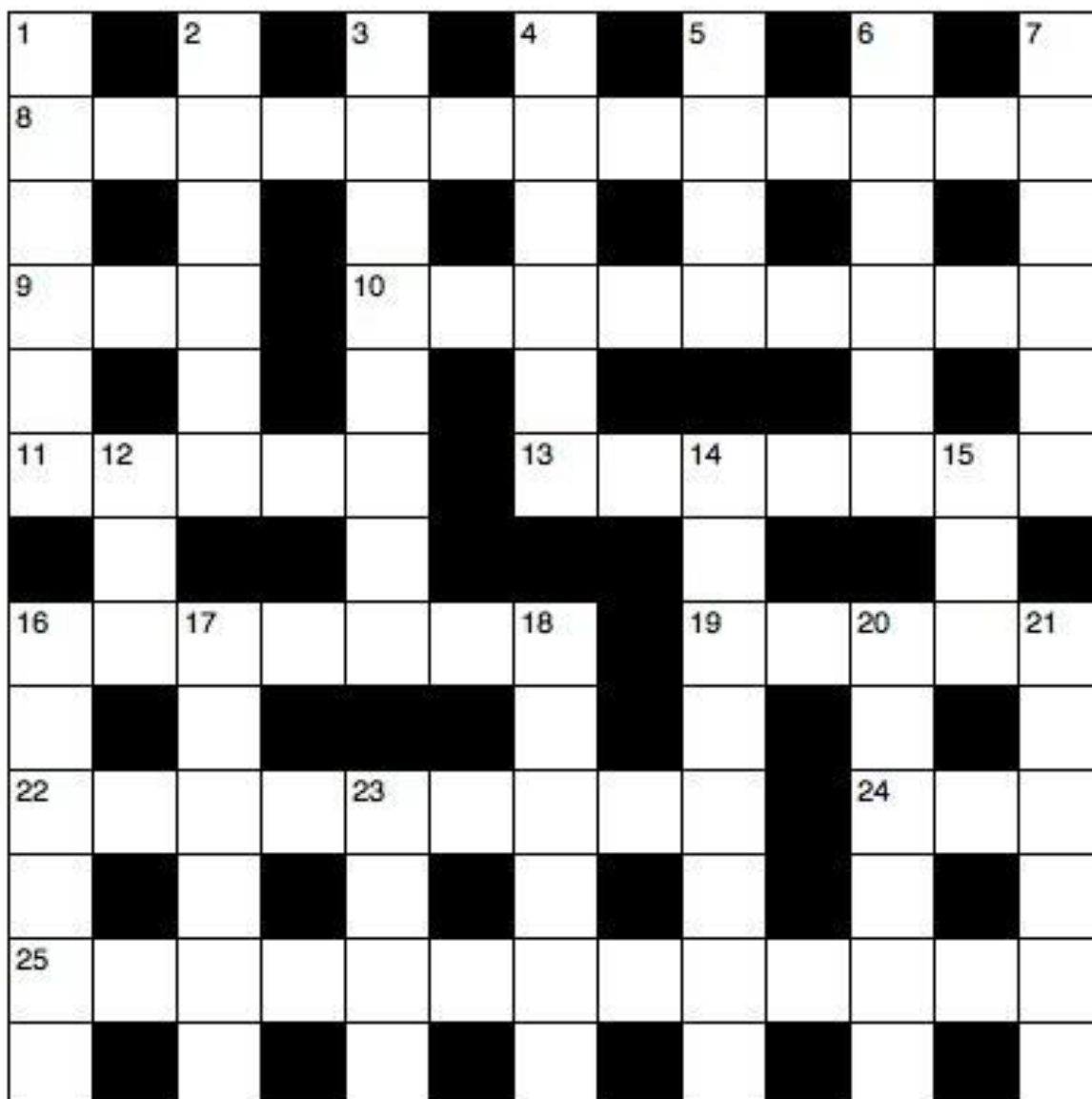
In the autumn of 2020, there were 591 men and women beginning ordination training. This autumn it will be about 370.

The Ministry Council has said the goal is to secure a “stable” number of 7600 full-time clergy, factoring in their projected retirements. To achieve this, the Church needs about 630 newly ordained ministers a year.

The Bishop of Chester, who chairs the Ministry Council, recently told General Synod that some of the factors affecting people’s decision have been identified. These include: local clergy wellbeing (or lack of it), demographic changes in society, lack of diocesan resources for vocations outreach work, suspicion of the CofE as an institution, concern over the Living in Love and Faith initiative, and the size of the clergy stipend package (there is considerable financial anxiety among existing clergy).

But, as one Diocesan Director of Ordinands said recently on social media, “We can’t really ask the missing candidates why they didn’t come forward. We can only speculate...”

## September crossword challenge!



### Across

8 Where the ark of the covenant was kept for 20 years (1 Samuel 7:1) (7,6)

9 One of the parts of the body on which blood and oil were put in the ritual cleansing from infectious skin diseases (Leviticus 14:14–17) (3)

10 Uncomfortable (3,2,4) 11 'Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have — ' (Malachi 1:3) (5)

13 Where Paul said farewell to the elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17) (7)

- 16 'Jesus bent down and — to write on the ground with his finger'  
(John 8:6) (7)
- 19 Prophet from Moresheth (Jeremiah 26:18) (5)
- 22 Comes between Exodus and Numbers (9)
- 24 and 2 Down 'Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy  
ministered before the Lord under — the — ' (1 Samuel 2:11) (3,6)
- 25 There was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7) (4,3,6)

## Down

- 1 Rough drawing (2 Kings 16:10) (6)
- 2 See 24 Across
- 3 Underground literature (including Christian books) circulated in the  
Soviet Union (8)
- 4 Lo, mash (anag.) (6)
- 5 The Bible's shortest verse: 'Jesus — ' (John 11:35) (4)
- 6 'Can a mother forget the baby at her — and have no compassion  
on the child she has borne?' (Isaiah 49:15) (6)
- 7 Can be seen in a dying fire (Psalm 102:3) (6)
- 12 'Send me, therefore, a man... experienced in the — of engraving,  
to work in Judah and Jerusalem' (2 Chronicles 2:7) (3)
- 14 Second city of Cyprus (8)
- 15 United Nations Association (1,1,1)
- 16 One of the women who first heard that Jesus had risen from the  
dead (Mark 16:1) (6)
- 17 Braved (anag.) (6)
- 18 — of Evangelism, outreach initiative in the 1990s (6)
- 20 'Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and — in their own  
sight' (Isaiah 5:21) (6)
- 21 'Neither — nor depth... will be able to separate us from the love of  
God' (Romans 8:39) (6)
- 23 What Jesus shed in 5 Down (4)

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