NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 2025

Bengeo Magazine

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF BENGEO, CHAPMORE END AND TONWELL




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GROUP
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Wednesdays
10-11.30am
Bengeo Parish Hall,
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2025 dates:
September 24th, October 22nd,
November 26th, December 17th
A new, friendly group
for babies, toddlers
and their grown-ups

Bengeo Parish Magazine and Community News

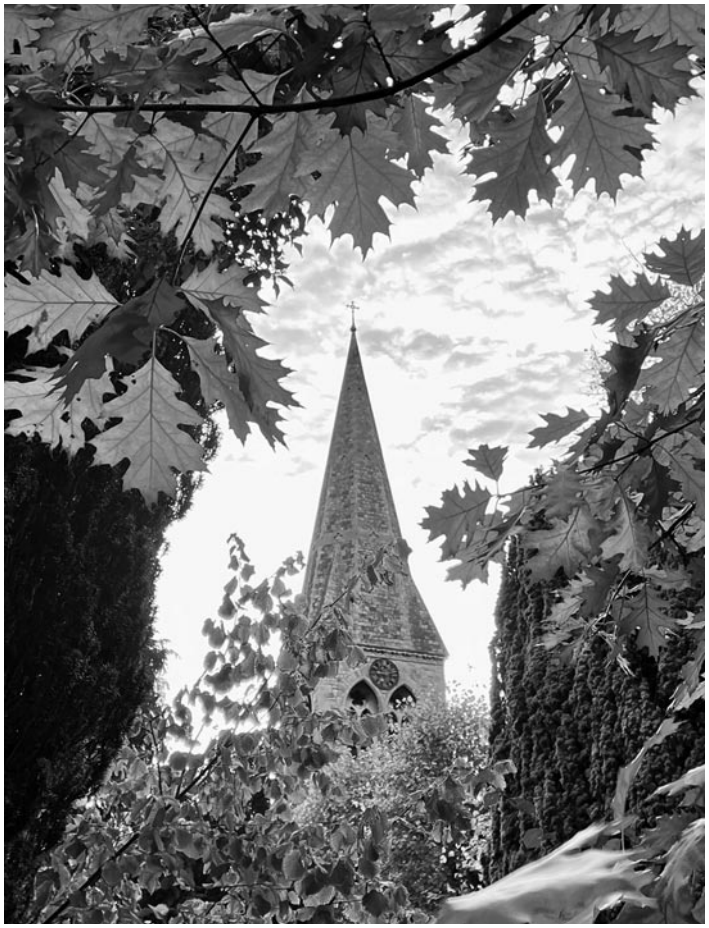


Photo credit: BRIDGET HERSANT

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Bengeo Community is coming together to take part in the planning process and to make Bengeo flourish. See the articles on pages 5 and 6 to see how you can help with this.

There are many ways to get involved with activities in Bengeo from the theatre, music and art gallery to lectures, lunches and more strenuous exercise. You can find it all on these pages.

This time, Bridget tells us about Clematis, a wild plant that you can see in profusion on the hedgerows this time of year.

As the autumn leaves fall and frost and maybe snow arrive, we hope you all have a very Merry Christmas.

The Editorial Team

The views expressed by the contributors are not necessarily those of the Editorial Team or the PCC. Whilst every care is taken, we cannot be responsible for the action of any of the contributors or advertisers in this magazine.

Front cover:
Aerial view of Holy Trinity Church by BG Drones.

Editorial Team
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SCAN ME

HERTFORD SHOWROOM

Planning application responses: Love Bengeo Community Group

www.lovebengeo.org.uk

In the last few months, the Love Bengeo Community Group (formerly the Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan Community Steering Group) have responded to four planning applications, including proposals for a residential development on Green Belt land near Fanshawes, Ware Park. Referencing the 'Important Views' policy





in the Neighbourhood Plan, the Group objected to the application, citing the potentially harmful impact a development on that site could have on the view from Watermill Lane North towards Ware Park Manor. Planning permission was refused by East Herts District Council, primarily on the basis of inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The Council's Landscape Officer noted the response from the Community Group and concluded that 'some degree of visual impact is likely'.

Concerns about the impact of construction activity on trees adjacent to a steep bank above homes in Archers Close, meant that an objection was also submitted to a Farquhar Street planning application.

The Group welcomed the planning application to convert the listed building at the bottom of Port Hill (most recently a veterinary surgery) into a home. The 'Listed Buildings and Structures' policy in the Neighbourhood Plan supports proposals that 'preserve or enhance the significance of the asset and its setting'.

The fourth response was to an application for the erection of a new house on Church Road. Noting the proposal to remove Leyland cypress trees, the Group referenced the 'Nature Conservation' policy in the Neighbourhood Plan, which encourages replacement of trees with native trees.

At the time of writing, decisions from East Herts District Council on the latter three planning applications are pending. Further information on the Group's responses to planning applications can be found on - News – Love Bengeo Community Group.

Update on the granting of planning permission for 118 homes on Bengeo Field

Save Bengeo Field Group are expecting to hear shortly from the Planning Court as to whether they will be granted a Judicial Review into the planning decision by East Herts District Council.

We now know that the Planning Court has designated our case as 'Significant'. We suspect this rating has been given as the planning permission breaches the condition in the Council's District Plan that quarrying must happen first on the neighbouring land before Phase Two can proceed.

Our understanding is that there are three possible responses from the Court:

1. Judicial Review is granted;
2. Judicial Review is not granted but some merit is recognised – this potentially allows us to apply for a reconsideration;
3. Our claim is judged to have no merit.

In advance of the decision by the Planning Court, we are keen to be able to show that Save Bengeo Field represents a strong group of residents. In order to do this formally, we will shortly be opening a Save Bengeo Field Ltd membership scheme at an annual cost of £10. If you are interested to support the group leading the Judicial Review and become a member of SBF Ltd, please send your name and email address to **askawp@yahoo.co.uk**, so that we can contact you with further details. Thank you for your support.

Would you like to own this Lonely Oak original picture?



Kate Tyrer, a local artist, has kindly donated this beautiful, framed watercolour in support of Love/Save Bengeo Field.

If you would like to purchase the raffle tickets (£1 a ticket, £5 a strip) or Bengeo cards (£3 a card, £5 for 2 cards, £24 for 10 cards) please contact askawp@yahoo.co.uk.



Bengeo Community Garden

On Sunday 12th October Bengeo Community Garden and Bengeo Front Gardens celebrated together with local residents in the Parish Hall. Thanks are owed to the Coffee Pot who brought coffee and cake and all who brought plants, bulbs and seeds to share. Kate Sheard from Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust gave a short talk encouraging everyone to do something in their garden to benefit wildlife. We also enjoyed Just love to Sing, Bengeo's very own local choir, fronted by Jenny Salmon.

In other news, the oak tree recently shed a large branch following which a tree inspection has led to some pruning and the removal of a fir tree. This should allow more light into the garden and hopefully we'll see the benefit of that next year.

In the meanwhile, look out for our next FUNdraiser – a Bingo Night on Saturday 8th November. There'll be cash prizes so be there – eyes down!

Veronica Fraser

Bengeo Community Mosaic Workshop – A Great Success!



Photo credit: ASKA WISNIEWSKA-PICKERING

Our recent Bengeo Community Mosaic Workshop was a wonderful success, bringing together residents of all ages to create a vibrant piece of artwork that celebrates our local spirit and creativity.

Under the guidance of our talented local mosaic artist, Claire Costello, participants learned new skills, shared ideas, and contributed to a lasting addition to our community space. The enthusiasm and teamwork on display were truly inspiring!

Due to the fantastic response, we're delighted to announce that further mosaic workshops will take place in January. Everyone is welcome to take part – whether you joined us last time or are completely new to mosaic making. Keep an eye out in future announcements for full details and booking information.

The Bengeo Mosaic project is supported by Arts in East Herts and Hertford Town Council and is part of Love Bengeo Community Group projects. If you would like further information please email **info@lovebengeo.org.uk**, or check our website **www.lovebengeo.org.uk**.

Catie Geering

Clearing the Steps Path



Photo credit: NICK GOUGH

Residents, councillors and members of the Molewood Residents' Association committee spent a happy two hours on Sunday 19th October clearing the path and steps from Church Road/The Avenue down to Molewood Road. Commuters and users of the route should notice the extra width and clear path. Hopefully, there will be fewer slips and trips.

The path and steps is actually a footpath managed by HCC's Rights of Way team. The team welcomed the MRA's offer to clear it again after the success of the first work party in November 2024. The plan is to go back on Sunday 23rd November to sweep away the last leaves. Look out for updates on social media and in the Notice Board at the top of the path.

Good news for users is that the County Council have agreed to the MRA's suggestion to provide a handrail down one side on the steeper parts.

Nick Gough

Friends of St Leonard's – Winter 2025

Winter Wassail

Winter is a quiet time of year for the Friends of St Leonard's but we always have time for a Wassail! Magpie Lane will join us again at St Leonard's on Friday 19th December at 7.30pm. These have always been very popular concerts as they get us all in the mood for Christmas with some traditional music and singing-along. Tickets are £15 and are available via **boxoffice@parishofbengeo.com** – this was a sell-out last year so get your bookings in quickly.

Keep in Touch

To keep in touch with our plans for 2026 at St Leonard's, please follow us on Facebook (Friends of St Leonard's Bengeo). If you want to get more involved, we would be happy to welcome you into the Friends. A very reasonable £5 for individuals and £10 for families for a year's membership gets you advance warning of our events. You can join through our website **www.stleonards.parishofbengeo.com/friends-of-st-leonards** or just get in touch via my email.

Helen Fleming
Secretaryfriendsofstleonards@gmail.com

On The Doorstep – Clematis

In this edition I have chosen the wild clematis, a rather less maligned plant than the last one, bindweed, but none the less vigorous, out-competing and smothering the plant it grows up.

Wild clematis is part of the buttercup family, Ranunculaceae, and its scientific name is Clematis Vitalba, which is: 'Clematis' from the Greek for climbing plant and 'vitalba' from Latin for white vine. The wild clematis has many common names, Virgin's bower, traveller's joy, old man's beard and hedge feather amongst others.

The plant is native to the UK and is found everywhere except northern Scotland. It is also native to southern and western Europe and parts of the Middle East. It can be found growing along the sides of fields, paths and roads. The plant favours chalky soils and likes to grow up sturdy hedgerows and bushes like a rose. It entwines its stem around the stalks of the hedgerow and as it does so, the stems of the clematis become ridged and wire-like, giving it support and enabling it to grow further and higher up the hedgerow or bush.

The leaves of the wild clematis grow opposite each other on the stem and are an oval shape, thinning out a little towards a point. They have a toothed edge. The plant blooms between July and September. The flowers are approximately 2cm across, growing in clusters. They are a creamy-white colour with a delicate scent in the summer. Some say they smell faintly of almonds. The flowers have a spikey appearance during the summer but then go on to develop seed heads with red-brown seeds with feathery long plumes. I presume these aid dispersal of the seeds and give the seed head its wispy look, giving rise to one of its common names, old man's beard. The seed heads are really rather attractive and will go on into the autumn and winter months.

The wild clematis is a good source of food for wildlife as it is visited by hoverflies and bees and is the sole food source of the chalk carpet moth and emerald moth. Goldfinches and greenfinches feed on the seeds.

The plant has been used for many things, medicinally it has been used in the past for rheumatic pain, fever, as a diuretic, for gout and skin



infections. This is a little odd as the plant contains toxins that are known to cause skin irritation and medieval beggars were known to rub the plant on themselves to cause sores and blisters in order to induce more sympathy from passers-by and the potential for charitable donations. The wiry stems of the plant have been used to tie sheaths and it has been known as 'boy's bacca' or 'smokewood' because the stems were cut, dried and children would smoke them.

The plant is considered inedible due to the venomous properties, but in Italy they boiled the leaves and put them in omelettes called 'Fritatta di vitabini', and it was considered a delicacy. Not sure I would want to try that one, although the process of boiling is supposed to get rid of the toxins.

The wild clematis is associated symbolically with mental beauty, ingenuity and natural elegance, as well as protection and safety. There are also several stories associated with the plant, including one that the 16th century botanist and herbalist John Gerard claimed to have named the plant 'traveller's joy', when taken with the plant's appearance on his pilgrimage to Thomas à Becket's shrine in Canterbury. One of my favourites though, is the German legend, where the story goes that Mary and the baby Jesus took shelter in the shade of a wild clematis during their flight to Eygpt, hence the name 'Virgin's bower'.

Whatever you call the wild clematis, it is indeed a joy to behold and if you are able to get out this autumn, one to look out for and appreciate.

Bridget Hersant

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Photo credit: PAM THAIN

Bengeo Toddler Group

This new friendly group for babies, toddlers and their grownups usually meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month. December is an exception as it is earlier in the month.

The group starts at 10am and finishes at 11.30am with singing and stories. It is aimed at very young children up to three years old. There is coffee available for the grown-ups.

Dates up to Christmas are 26th November, 17th December and in the New Year on 28th January, 25th February, 25th March and 22nd April. Just turn up or contact Barbara Kiln for more information on **07488 309730**.

Monday Lunches at the Church Hall

The next lunch is on the 10th November and the December lunch is on the 8th. The cost of the November lunch is the usual price of £20 and the December Christmas lunch is £25.

If you wish to come, all you have to do is to ring Claire at the Lobster Pot on **07887 543464** at least seven days before.

People arrive from 12 o'clock and lunch is served at half past 12. To give you some idea of what to expect: October's lunch was mackerel paté served with melba toast, shepherd's pie served with three vegetables and plum upside-down cake. All served with red and white wine. Coffee or tea to finish with, served with mint creams.

The tables are invitingly laid with white cotton cloths and decorated with flowers or candelabra, depending on what we are celebrating. For instance, Burn's Night (at lunchtime!) in January has a special menu.

Anyone who comes alone will be welcomed and found a place to sit, preferably with some people that they know.

Janet Guilbride

Bengeo Afternoon WI

Bengeo Afternoon Women's Institute meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 2pm in **The Church Hall, Duncombe Road, Bengeo, SG14 3DA** and extend a warm welcome to visitors.

On 5th November 2025 our speaker will be Bill Hamilton, a reporter and football referee, his career in both spans many years with lots of tales to tell. For our December meeting, we have Zoe Jasko coming. Zoe is a local author.

Light refreshments will be served too. Both speakers are very entertaining so do please come along if you are able, first visit is free. Hope to see you soon.

The Children's Society

A reminder for all House Box Holders, the annual count is now taking place, if we haven't already had your box, we would be very pleased if it could be returned to us as soon as you can.

Due to various reasons, we have decided that this will be the final year for house boxes, however, any donations can still be made direct to the Children's Society and we will still be having Christingle Services and Spring Coffee Mornings.

Thank you so much for all your generous support over the years.

Christingle Service

Advent Sunday 30th November at 4pm in Holy Trinity Church

Please come and join us for another delightful Christingle Service, a Service for all ages to raise money for the Children's Society. Pass the word on to family and friends to come and receive a Christingle in return for a donation.

Thank you for supporting the Children's Society for their invaluable work with youngsters in difficult and desperate circumstances.

Any queries about the House Boxes or the Christingle Service please contact me on 01992 583979.

Many thanks

Libby Shillito



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Courtyard Arts Members' Show 2025
25th November – 23rd December

Our annual Members' Show returns this year, showcasing the wonderful, varied work created over the year.

In our Stables Gallery:

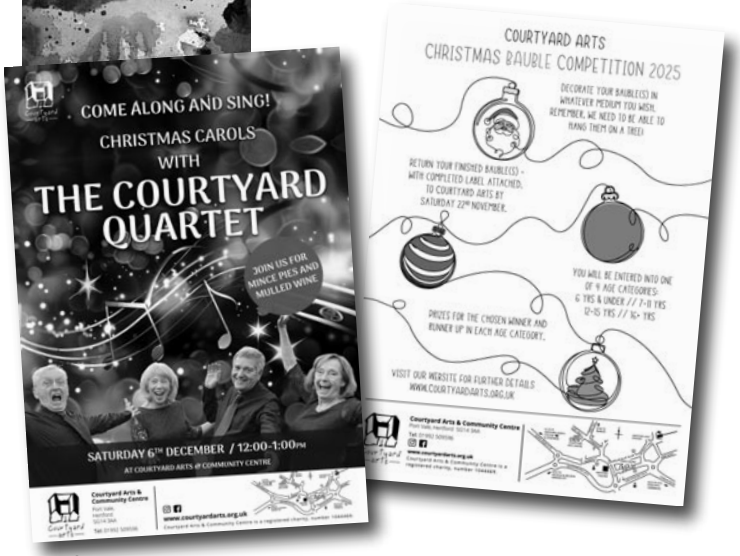


Deana Kim Page
TA-DA!
4th – 29th November



Claire Carey
The space in-between
2nd – 30th December

Courtyard Arts has just launched their annual Bauble Competition for children. Enter by the 22nd November.



Our free Carol Concert by the Courtyard Quartet is on Saturday 6th December from noon until 1pm.

COPS Little Theatre

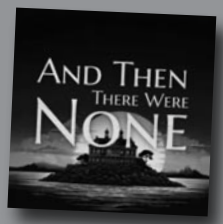
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November Entertainment Nights

- **8th** The Soul Man
- **21st** Wine Tasting Evening (Tickets £22 each)
- **22nd** Scratch
- **29th** Motown Soul & Ska Disco

December Entertainment Nights

- **6th** The Bonnet
- **20th** Escape Party
- **24th** Mario Christmas Eve
- **31st** New Year's Eve Party with (DJ Dave and Friends) Dawnchasers

There are several classes being held at THE BENGEO CLUB

- **Pilates** Monday and Thursday mornings, contact JB Fitness **07768 778390**
- **Yoga with Kirsty** Mondays and Wednesdays **07912 107915**
- **Post Natal Pilates** with Susie, Tuesdays **susiebenaim@gmail.com**
- **Pilates** Tuesday evenings and Friday mornings, Marta Pilates **07833 145708**
- **Karate Children's Classes** Thursday from 4pm, Jason **07540 429627**
- **APEX School of Dance** (children 3+) Mondays and Saturdays – apexschoolofdance@outlook.com
- **Susie's Pilates** Sunday mornings **susiebenaim@gmail.com**

Changes in Bengeo Parish

The 1st October 2025 marked a significant milestone in the journey of the Parish of Bengeo as it changed from being part of the Hertford Team Ministry to become again a Parish in its own right. Also the Reverend Robert Thompson will be transitioned from a Team Vicar in the Team Ministry of Hertford to become the Rector of Bengeo. This also means that the Abel Smith family can recontinue their long-established patronage of Bengeo Parish.

To mark the occasion, The Bishop of Hertford, Jane Mainwaring, and the Archdeacon of Hertford and Ware, Janet Mackenzie, will carry out a Service of licensing of Rev Robert Thompson at Holy Trinity church on Saturday 29th November at 3pm.

All parishioners are welcome to attend.

Background to the changes in Bengeo Parish

The history of Bengeo can be traced back to the Domesday Book. The name is derived from Old English meaning 'a spur or ridge over the River Beane'. It changed its name from Belingehou (11th Century) to Beningho (13th Century) to Bengeho (15th Century), then to Bebjow (16th Century) and then to Bengeo. St Leonard's was the Parish Church.

In the 19th Century the increasing population of Bengeo overtook the capacity of St Leonard's and Holy Trinity was built in 1855. In other cases Anglo Saxon Churches were demolished and new Churches were built on their site, but luckily for Bengeo St Leonard's survived. Christ Church was built in Port Vale in 1868 but demolished in the 1960s.

The Parish extended out over the areas of Tonwell, Chapmore End and Waterford. Waterford became a Parish in its own right when the Church was built there in 1871 to 1872, but otherwise the Parish boundaries have remained largely unchanged and despite some development much is still rural.

My family came to Hertfordshire in 1801 when my great, great, great grandfather (Samuel Smith, a Banker from Nottingham) purchased Woodhall. Later additions were over the areas of Tonwell, Chapmore End and Waterford, much of which were in Bengeo Parish.

I think the convergence of the land and the Parish created an empathy between Bengeo and my family. Samuel Smith died in 1834 and his son Abel Smith, my great, great grandfather, contributed, alongside a public appeal, to the building of Holy Trinity in 1855, which is when he would have become Patron. He died in 1859 and passed the Patronage to his eldest son, also called Abel Smith. His second son was Robert Smith of Goldings who gave the church plate, reredos and lych gate to Holy Trinity Church. He was Patron of Waterford.

The system of Patronage goes back to pre-Reformation days. The traditional Patron's role was to appoint a new Rector, in consultation with the Bishop and Church Wardens, and to formally present him to the Bishop at a Service of Induction. He took full and sole responsibility for the Appointment. A Rector would know that he could approach a Patron, who, with no vested interest, was available for impartial advice and support. Not only are there Private Patrons, but also The Crown and many Oxford and Cambridge Colleges and other Institutions have the Right of Presentation. Nowadays appointments are carried out by a committee comprising the Bishop, Archdeacon, Patron and Church Wardens who take collective responsibility.

There is a parallel in the journey of a Parish and the management of rural land. Both need to uphold the traditions of the past but be responsive to the changing social and economic requirements of the present, with an eye to the future. It is important to pass such responsibilities on to our successors in better shape than when we commenced, as, in this way, the past can be rolled forward through the present and into the future.

Bengeo has benefitted from a long line of Rectors, dating back to the days of St Leonard's, all of whom have provided a high standard of worship and pastoral care. Such continuity speaks for itself, and my family and I wish the Parish all the best in the next stages of its journey and we will continue to support it as best we can.

Ralph Abel Smith
Patron of Bengeo Parish

Hertford Adult Learning Group

Portraiture in Britain: Highlights across Five Centuries

Six session course January to March 2026

Come and enjoy discovering a wide variety of portraits from Holbein, van Dyck and Hogarth to the pioneer Victorian photographers and radical artists of the twentieth century. We are very pleased to welcome local art historian Claire Gittings to give us six sessions on this fascinating subject.

Sessions will be held on Tuesday mornings 10am–11.30am, at the Parish Church Hall, Duncombe Road, Bengeo. Start date 20th January 2026, Half-term 17th February, end date 3rd March. Fees (payable in advance) TBA. Everyone on the mailing list will receive details when they are finalised. Your place is reserved once you have paid the fee.

The emphasis in Hertford Adult Learning Group (HALG) is very much on learning for pleasure in a sociable atmosphere. Do come and join us.

To join our mailing list send your contact details to **halg.contact@gmail.com**.

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Coffee Pot

Coffee Pot is held every Thursday in the Church Hall from 10.30am–12 noon. Ron Winkley has been our star helper for 16 years since the Coffee Pot started. He has put up tables and chairs to get ready every week but has now decided to retire from this task.

Last Thursday we made a presentation to him to thank him for all his hard work.

Pam Thain



Photo credit: JAN SULLIVAN

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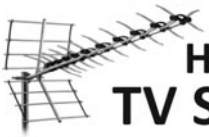
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Mill Mead Primary School



Ducklings' class have been exploring the book 'A Wet Walk' and thinking about the sounds at the start of the key words. In maths, it has all been about counting, through songs and rhymes and exploring the maths resources we have in the classroom. Through our core book 'The Ugly Duckling', we have talked about the school value of being kind and sharing.



Birds' class have drawn story arcs, learnt about onomatopoeia words and done lots of work on adjectives. In Maths, we have been looking at place value of numbers up to 10 and now we are using different strategies to add and subtract numbers within 10. We have also explored similarities and differences and created our own time capsule.



Mice class have been doing some fantastic phonics, superb patterns and counting in maths, identifying weather types in science and exploring mark making with chalks, crayons and pens in art. The children have thoroughly enjoyed their music and Spanish lessons taught by our specialist team from Simon Balle.

Hedgehogs' class has found out how schools were different in the past. They have studied explanation texts, using a brilliant story from an author local to Hertford, *'The Leaf Thief'*. The children have been enjoying dance in PE, where they've been moving to different rhythms and expressing themselves through movement.

Squirrels' class have enjoyed reading a range of fables, spotting the morals hidden within them and then using their own imagination to create brand new fables of their own. They have compared life in the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age, discussing everything from tools and homes to food and clothing.

Owls' class have been revisiting key skills such as place value and rounding in Maths. In Science, our topic on the human body has sparked lots of curiosity – especially when we explored the digestive system. Our class book, *The Wild Robot*, has captured everyone's imagination, and we are all hooked on the adventures of Roz and Brightbill. A particular favourite has been writing diary entries from the perspective of one of the wicked sisters!



Badgers' class have impressed us in Science with the creative solar system projects they completed at home. In Maths, they have been focusing on place value and exploring strategies for addition and subtraction. In Computing, they are learning how to search for information effectively and how to recognise unreliable or misleading sources online.



Foxes' class have been getting to grips with new maths concepts; exploring historical changes in society – including women's fight for suffrage – through the census; putting their language skills to the test in French, and discovering the wonderful world of Cogheart in English. Everyone has been working hard on our Schools' Shakespeare Festival production of Julius Caesar. Early rehearsals are looking great and we cannot wait to see how the play turns out.

Bengeo Primary School

Bikeability

Year 6 children enjoyed the opportunity to take part in Bikeability the week of 13th October. The children enjoyed bringing their bikes into school each day. They were learning how to improve their cycle control and how to ride on the road safely.





Forest School

Year 2 children entered forest school and became witches, cats, dogs, birds and frogs. They followed the story of Room on the Broom and made bubbling potions and a witches' brew. All of the children practised tying a knot around their middle and their shoes! They walked log dogs around the forest and made magic wands, finishing with a game of 'witches whispers'.





Amwell View School – Tonwell Satellite



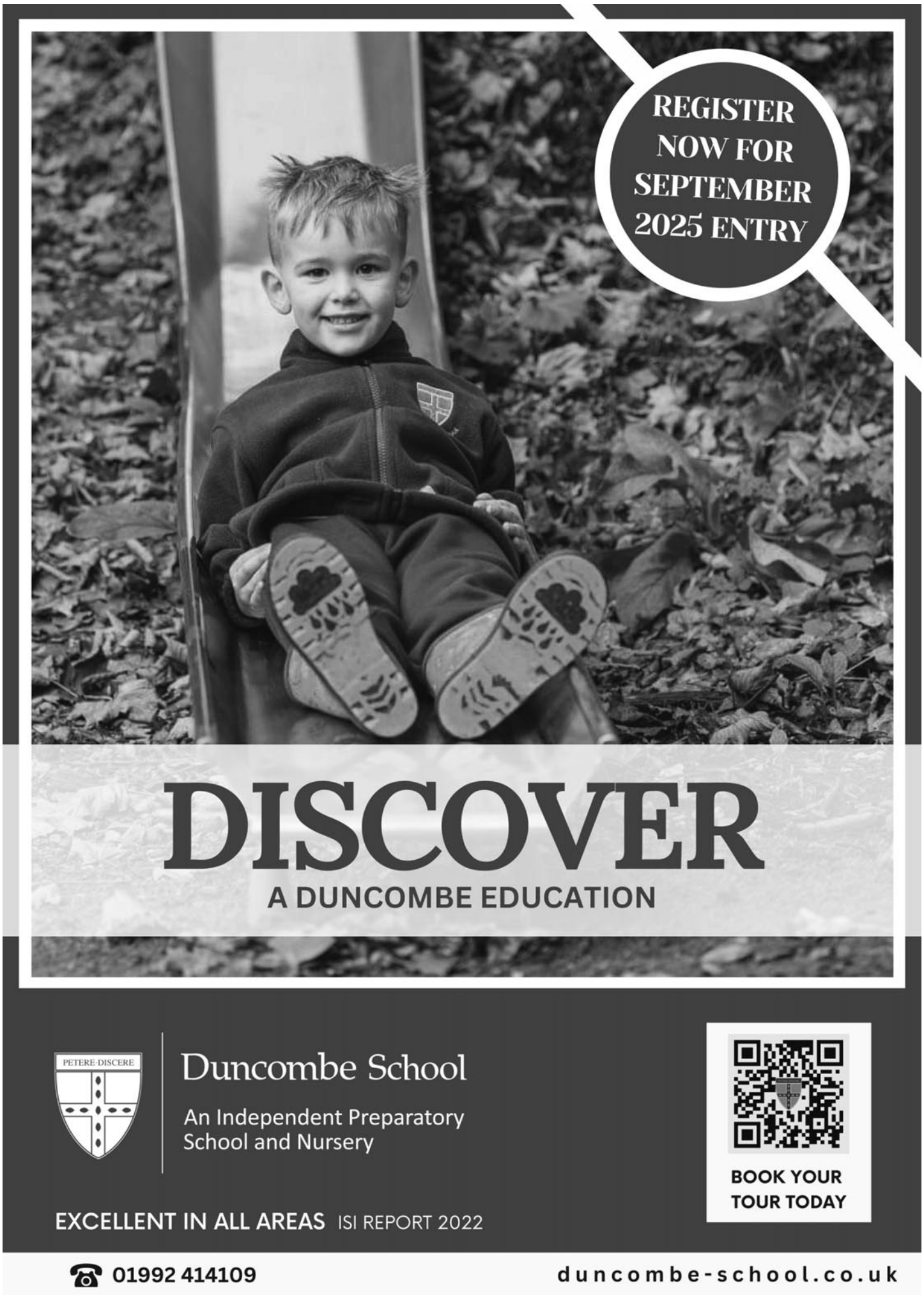


Harvest Festival

Amwell View School increased the number of pupils who attend the Tonwell Satellite school by a further 11 pupils from September 2025, bringing the total number to 21. The school has two classes Tonwell 1 and Tonwell 2, with plans for a third class to open in the near year.

Headteacher, Neil Ward said "the expansion of this satellite school will allow the increase in pupils on roll at our Stanstead Abbotts' site. We recognise the importance of creating more spaces to ensure that parents and carers can send their children, who have special educational needs, to a school to ensure they can learn and be safe as they continue their path to adulthood".

On Wednesday 24th September 2025, the pupils hosted their first celebratory service with parents in attendance for their Harvest Festival. Class Teacher, Hayley Warrington said "The pupils brought along lots of handmade Harvest crafts, such as leaf cellophane decorations and pattern garlands, which they enjoyed showing off to each other and their parents. They also brought along the class scarecrows, which they helped to make earlier in the week. Pupils enjoyed dancing and singing to lots of Harvest songs and loved celebrating all together for the first time this academic year".


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Every child's journey begins the moment they step through our doors. Starting at age 2 within our Treetops Pre-School, learning becomes an adventure where curiosity and creativity thrive. Our child-centred approach blends traditional teaching with hands-on experiences, making each day exciting and educational.



As children transition into Main School (ages 5-11), the curriculum expands to accommodate diverse learning styles and foster strength of character. Small class sizes ensure personalised attention, allowing our teachers to explore and progress every child's talent.

Specialist teachers guide younger children through subjects such as Spanish, French, ICT, and Music, while older children, alongside these subjects, also delve deeper into English, Maths, and Science, with lessons tailored to help them excel.



Enrichment is at the core of our philosophy. From World Book Week, International Languages Day and Science Week, our dynamic calendar of events brings learning to life, fostering a love of knowledge beyond the classroom.

We are extremely proud to have been awarded Highly Commended for 'Excellence in STEM' in the Muddy Stilettos School Awards 2024 and to have been shortlisted for 'Co-educational Independent School of the Year', reflecting our commitment to educational excellence.

In the digital age we live in, we lead the way with innovative programmes that make learning fun and future-focused. We equip children with the skills to thrive online, ensuring they are both knowledgeable and safe.

At Duncombe, wellbeing is key. We create a positive environment that nurtures both physical and mental health, through initiatives like buddy sessions and wellbeing programmes, ensuring every child feels valued.



Our children graduate from Duncombe as confident, compassionate individuals ready to thrive in the 21st Century.

A Word from The Rectory

Happy Halloween

From The Vicar, The Revd Robert Thompson



Is celebrating an occasion that honours ghouls, demons, ghosts, and everything that goes bump in the night dangerous or even evil? Somewhere, in the depths of history, Halloween or All Hallows Eve, got hijacked. What started as a day to prepare for All Saints' Day (1st November) became a spooky, evil, and chocolate-filled observance. But it wasn't always this way.

In fact, the term 'Halloween' from its beginnings, had nothing to do with any pagan or evil beliefs. Defining Halloween depends on your sense of what is 'hallowed' or 'holy'. In the Lord's Prayer, Christians pray, 'Our Father, in heaven, hallowed be your name…' In the fourth century, John Chrysostom tells us that the Eastern church celebrated a festival in honour of all saints who had died, and by the seventh and eighth centuries, Christians were making 'All Saints' Day' a regular important event to celebrate the lives of remarkable Christian men and women – holy heroes of the faith.

With all this holiness around it makes you wonder how Halloween got to be associated with evil spirits. But there's some history to that too. More than a thousand years ago Christians confronted pagan rites appeasing the lord of death and evil spirits. Druids in Britain and France observed the end of summer with sacrifices to the gods. It was the beginning of the Celtic year, and they believed Samhain, the lord of death, sent evil spirits abroad to attack humans, who could escape only by assuming disguises and looking like evil spirits themselves. The waning of the sun and the approach of dark winter made the evil spirits rejoice and play nasty tricks.

So you can stow your Dracula cape, witches hat or Frankenstein mask. It turns out that 'evil' themes at Halloween are pure invention – just another way of getting your kids to persuade you to buy something grim and macabre from the supermarket.

All things considered, perhaps it's time to find a way to reclaim Halloween from its current feared status. We should shoehorn the stories of the saints back into public attention. If all it takes is a bit of blood and gore to awaken people's macabre curiosity, then the stories of the saints beat Bram Stoker's Dracula and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* hands down.

How about the botched beheading of St Cecilia? St Cyriacus having his limbs torn off? Kids always remember St Catherine – broken on a wheel that went flying out of control. Or, for all you true romantics out there, tell the story of St Valentine who refused to renounce his faith and was promptly beaten to death by clubs and stones before a summary beheading, one creepy 14th February a long, long time ago. (Ah, lovely).

Go on – laugh. You really should, you know. It's the best way by far to kick the devil off his Halloween podium. Evil enjoys being taken seriously and Satan has no sense of humour. That's why at the beginning of *The Screwtape Letters*, CS Lewis included two telling quotations, the first from Martin Luther: 'The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn'. The second comes from Thomas More: 'The devil… the proud spirit cannot endure to be mocked'.

The one thing the Devil cannot bear is to be a source of laughter – the story of his infernal rebellion against God assures him lead role in an absurd farce. He'd love it if enough people in the audience would take it seriously. And those Christians who spend the night of 31st October filled with concern over what evils might be (and sometimes are) taking place are doing just that. We should be smiling with saints and archangels. Don't take the Devil seriously. Take the St Michael.

Let's take back All Hallows Eve by embracing All Saints Day and remembering our 'saints'. Dress the kids up and have a party. Tell some stories about the

saints and make them memorable (but don't terrify them!). Give some money to aid a good cause rather than boost sales of rubber spiders and plastic masks. Play games and share some treats in a safe place. By all means, and for the best of reasons – have a happy Halloween.

With my prayers,

Robert Thompson

All Saints' Sunday is 2nd November



Wassail at St Leonard's

Once again, the popular folk group Magpie Lane will be cheering us with a Wassail evening at St Leonard's Church at 7.30pm on Friday 19th December.

Come and sing along and enjoy mulled wine in the candlelight.

Tickets are £15. Please book early via boxoffice@parishofbengeo.com as they are sure to be in great demand.

Operation Christmas Child – Shoebox Appeal 2025

This year we are again supporting the Shoebox appeal which sends gifts to children across the world.

We hope that you would wish to help us by filling a Shoebox with items for a needy child or by providing items to help others to fill a box.

You can also donate money to help pay the transport costs of sending the Shoeboxes abroad.

Please help us and bring your offerings to Holy Trinity Church or to 30 The Wick by Sunday 9th November.

For more information please get in touch with Eileen or Jim Smith on **01992 558070** or **jimatwick030@gmail.com**.

Thank you



Parish Calendar NOVEMBER 2025

Sunday 2nd November	**All Saints' Sunday**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 4th November	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Wednesday 5th November	
2pm	Bengeo Afternoon WI, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
2.30–4pm	Bereavement Cafe at Secret Garden Café, Bengeo
Thursday 6th November	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 9th November	**Third Sunday before Advent (Remembrance Sunday)**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion. Commemorating the Fallen at Bengeo War Memorials
Tuesday 11th November	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Wednesday 12 November	
10am	Craft Club, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Thursday 13th November	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 16th November	**Second Sunday before Advent Safeguarding Sunday**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 18th November	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Thursday 20th November	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
6.30-8pm	Bereavement Cafe at Secret Garden Café, Bengeo
Sunday 23rd November	**Christ The King**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 25th November	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Thursday 27th November	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Saturday 29th November	
3pm	Service of Licensing of Rev Robert Thompson with the Bishop of Hertford
Sunday 30th November	**Advent Sunday**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
4pm	Christingle Service supporting the work of The Children's Society

Parish Calendar DECEMBER 2025

Tuesday 2nd December	
8pm	Advent Group at Holy Trinity Church: Discussion and Learning
Wednesday 3rd December	
2pm	Bengeo Afternoon WI, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
2.30–4pm	Bereavement Cafe at Secret Garden Café, Bengeo
Thursday 4th December	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 7th December	**Second Sunday of Advent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
3.30pm	Annual Christmas Service of Remembrance and Lighting of Evergreen Tree Remembering Loved Ones, at Holy Trinity Churchyard
Tuesday 9th December	
8pm	Advent Group at Holy Trinity Church: Discussion and Learning
Wednesday 10th December	
10am	Craft Club, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Thursday 11th December	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 14th December	**Third Sunday of Advent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
4pm	'Sing Noel' Carol Service with guest musical items
Tuesday 16th December	
8pm	Advent Group at Holy Trinity Church: Discussion and Learning
Thursday 18th December	
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
6.30–8pm	Bereavement Cafe at Secret Garden Café, Bengeo
Friday 19th December	
7.30pm	Christmas Wassail at St. Leonard's Church, Bengeo Wassailing with mulled wine and Magpie Lane Folk Band
Sunday 21st December	**Fourth Sunday of Advent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Wednesday 24th December	**Christmas Eve**
4pm	Blessing of the crib. All Age Service around the Christmas crib
7pm	Carols by Candlelight – favourite carols, poems and seasonal readings in a candlelit church
Thursday 25th December	**Christmas Day**
10am	Festival All Age Communion – celebrating the birth of Jesus with carols old and new
Sunday 28th December	**The Sunday of Christmas**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion

Parish Prayers

Daily Prayers for November

1. Our Memorial Garden
2. All Saints
3. Duncombe Close
4. Oxfam Aid in Africa
5. Christians in Gaza
6. HMP Berwyn, North Wales
7. Hertford and Ware Food Bank
8. Cancer Research UK
9. All who have fallen in conflict
10. Eleanor Road
11. Veteran and Emergency Response Charities, work with the bereaved
12. Craft Club
13. HMP Birmingham
14. The Royal Family
15. Our Lent Charity CHiPS
16. All on the coffee rotas at Church and Coffee Pot
17. Elton Road
18. Samaritan's Purse, Shoebox initiative
19. Christians in Libya
20. HMP Brinsford, Young Offenders Prison, Wolverhampton
21. Christians Against Poverty
22. Local Planning, Land Use and Development
23. Christ The King
24. Elton Court
25. Samaritans Purse – assisting women at risk
26. Christian Churches in Afghanistan
27. HMP Bristol
28. Liverpool Anglican Cathedral
29. Church Missionary Society
30. Advent

Daily Prayers for December

1. Fanshawe Court
2. Refugees In Hertfordshire
3. Christians in Sudan
4. HMP Brixton, London
5. Prison Governors' Association
6. Pubs and Clubs in Bengeo
7. Our Choir
8. Fanshawe Street
9. Our Dementia and Alzheimer Outreach
10. Christians in Jordan
11. HMP Brownfield, privately run Women's Prison
12. Our 'Open the Book' outreach into schools
13. The Salvation Army Winter Refuge Centres
14. All who are homeless
15. Farquhar Street
16. Our Christmas Services for Schools
17. Christian Churches in Morocco
18. HMP Buckley Hall, Manchester
19. Future Hope Bus on Hartham and Ware
20. Christians in Sport
21. Our Church Cleaning and Maintenance
22. Garratts Close
23. Local Doctors and Dentists
24. Christians in Bethlehem on the West Bank
25. Our families
26. Our Friends
27. Liverpool Cathedral
28. Our neighbours
29. Oxfam Charity Shops
30. Isabel Hospice, Welwyn Garden City
31. Thanks for the passing year

Register

6th September Wedding
Mitchell Kirwin and Joanna Tomeo

27th September Wedding
Jonathan Scott and Elizabeth Kiely

12th September Funeral **Sylvia Norman**

29th September Memorial Service **Sylvia Norman**

17th October Burial of Ashes
Donald Skidmore and Angela Skidmore

20th October Burial of Ashes **Bryan Lovell**



Quiet Time

Quiet Time is on Tuesday evenings at 8pm in Holy Trinity Church. During Advent on the 2nd, 9th and 16th December there will be Advent discussion and learning sessions.

Church Contacts

Team Vicar: The Reverend Robert Thompson
The Rectory, Byde Street, Bengeo, SG14 3BS
T: **01992 413691** E: **info@parishofbengeo.com**

Associate Priest: Fr. David Pepper
T: **07583 985266**

Reader: Bob Kelly
T: **01763 274653**

Churchwardens:
Diana Howarth T: **07711 571272**
Graham Squires T: **01992 553465**

Parochial Church Council
Chairman: **Rev Robert Thompson**
Honorary Secretary: **David Greely**
T: **01920 412485**

Director of Music and Organist:
Dr Andrew Sentance

Assistant Organist: William Sarjeant

St Leonard's Church
Friends of St Leonard's
New Member Secretary: **Sue Patterson**

Addresses
Holy Trinity Church
New Road, Hertford SG14 3JJ
St Leonard's Church
St Leonard's Road, Bengeo, SG14 3JW

Local Contacts for Help and Advice

Below are links to local services.

Medical and Health Advice
www.nhs.uk

Domestic Abuse

Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline
0808 808 8088 [Freephone Monday to Friday, 9am–9pm; Saturday and Sunday 9am–4pm]

Refuge Free and Confidential Helpline 24/7
0808 2000 247

Financial Advice

Hertfordshire Support Fund
If you need help, regardless of whether you qualify for benefits, please call HertsHelp on **0300 123 4044**, email **info@hertshelp.net** or visit **www.hertshelp.net**.

For more information about the support on offer for residents both locally and national, please visit **www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/costofliving**.

Money Advice Unit
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/benefits

Citizens Advice Service – East Herts

Local Message Line 01920 459944. Monday to Thursday, leave a message with your details, and an adviser will call you back Monday to Thursday, between 10am–4pm.

Out of Hours Helpline 0800 144 8848. Monday to Wednesday, 4–8pm, Thursday and Friday 4–9pm, and Saturday 10am–4pm.

Local contact centres: **Hertford Sele Community Hub, 18 Fleming Crescent, Sele, Hertford, SG14 2DJ**. Open Wednesdays 11am–1pm. **Ware Contact Centre, Ware Priory, High Street Ware SG12 9AL.** Open Tuesdays 11am–1pm.

National Debtline
www.nationaldebtline.org
Helpline 0808 808 4000. Monday to Friday 9am–8pm, Saturday 9.30am–1pm, Sunday closed.

Advice on avoiding scams

Sign up for scam alerts from trading standards
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/updateme

Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline
0808 223 1133

Mental Health Advice and Support

NHS Mental Health Services in Herts
Call for free **0800 644 101** this number is open 24/7 or call **111** and choose option 2
E: **hpft.spa@nhs.net**

Herts Mind Network
www.hertsmindnetwork.org
020 3727 3600 | **0300 777 0707** [8am–7pm]
Nightline: **01923 256391**

Emotional Support and Practical Help

Samaritans
116 123 lines open 24 hours a day, calls are free
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On The Doorstep – Clematis

Photographs of Clematis.
See Bridget Hersant's article on page 7.











Christmas

in the Parish of Bengeo

Annual Christmas Service of Remembrance & Lighting of Evergreen Tree
Remembering Loved Ones, in Holy Trinity Churchyard & Memorial Garden
Sunday 7th December, 3.30pm

'Sing Noel!' Christmas Carol Service
Sunday 14th December, 4pm
Carol Concert with guest musical items

Christmas Wassail at St. Leonard's Church, Bengeo
Wassailing with mulled wine and Magpie Lane Folk Band
Friday 19th December, St. Leonard's Church, 7.30pm
All tickets £15
Bookings: call 07910 822069 or
email boxoffice@parishofbengeo.com

Christmas Eve at Holy Trinity Church, Bengeo
Blessing of the crib, 4pm
All Age Service around the Christmas crib
Carols by Candlelight, 7pm
Favourite Carols, poems and seasonal
readings in a candlelit church

Christmas Day at Holy Trinity Church, Bengeo
Festival All Age Communion, 10am
Celebrating the birth of Jesus with
carols old and new



Holy Trinity Church, New Rd,
St. Leonard's Church, St. Leonard's Road
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