



Chelmsford Circuit

Issue 33

Newsletter Date: Nov and Dec 2024



GROWTH

As I write there's quite a cacophony of noise outside the window - gardeners are in trimming our hedges, bushes and shrubs, an autumnal ritual! Until now I've always attempted to tackle this job myself, but this year I've had to admit defeat, the rate of growth seems to be unstoppable. It has felt that the more I've cut things the faster they have grown!

I remind myself that the picture language of the Bible when it comes to horticultural metaphors - or should I say viticultural images in particular - speaks to us about this exact situation.

Viticulture is the study and practice of growing grapevines, with the goal of producing grapes. The Psalmist used such imagery in Psalm 80: here a vine is the symbol of God's people, who, though a young tender vine which was 'brought out of Egypt', was planted and took root in Israel. The health of the vine and the vineyards in the Old Testament reflected the state of the nation.

In the New Testament Jesus takes up the theme: describing himself as the "true vine" who will be the source of life to his disciples, who are the branches: "I am the vine; you are the branches".

In the pruning, that trimming back feels so counterintuitive - how can such clipping and reducing possibly prove fruitful? Weirdly in the pruning is growth, and that growth brings fruitfulness.

There are likely many times in our lives when we feel things are going in the wrong direction, going backwards. Perhaps it might feel like a severe curtailment to the growth we want to see?

Maybe next time I am muttering about the rapid growth of the huge and ancient jasmin that climbs over a pergola in my garden, I should be mindful that the growth that astounds me is a reflection of the fruitfulness of pruning. I gave that jasmine a good strong pruning two years ago and even more abundant growth has been the result!

May we too see abundant spiritual growth as a result of being part of God's vineyard!

Blessings, Mark



Dynamic women pivotal in ecumenical church plant

The story of the growth of the single congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) in Great Notley in Essex.



Val Spouge
(on the right)



Betty Bartrop

In 1994 two women, Val Spouge and Betty Bartrop, and a group of young mums met to pray and study the Bible together on a new housing estate in Great Notley, near Braintree in Essex.

After some time they began to gather other Christians and meet together in a portacabin provided by the local developer of the estate. Committed to doing this ecumenically, each week a different lay preacher or minister would join them leading a service from either the Baptist, Methodist, URC or Anglican tradition. For a while it was called St Portacabin!

It was Val, a Methodist lay pastor, who in April 2000, with the encouragement of [Through Faith Missions](#), decided to do a community survey. She shared the idea of a church building that would be built to serve both the needs of Christians and the wider community. This led to a request for a nursery to be an integral part and player in whatever was built.

Supported by senior leaders from [Churches Together in Essex and East London \(CTEEL\)](#), a Local Advisory Group was set up bringing denominations together to plan what the building would look like and whose purposes it would serve. Val told me, “The local Anglican Priest piped up in one meeting in the early stages of planning – We’ll call it St Saviour’s! Val told him, “No, we won’t, this is going to be a church in Great Notley, it’s for everyone”, explaining she felt very strongly about that.

Val and Betty were joined by other dynamic women like Jacqui King (former County Ecumenical Officer for CTEEL) who all longed to see a church building established that might engage with, and bless, the community. Through tirelessly engaging with denominational representatives, the developers of the site and the community, a church building went up incredibly fast.

Jacqui played a key role in the building project, drawing on skills learnt from working with the Salvation Army. The building cost £685,000 – much coming from the local community in all sorts of ways, a large chunk from the denominations involved and a final £70,000 from the developers Countryside (a loan which could be paid back if possible but probably written off now). The building was opened in August 2010.

Today [the church](#) is being used in all sorts of ways on a daily basis with a pre-school permanently operating, a messy church established and a [weekly Snackanory](#). Local community groups use the space, as well as a weekly café connecting with older folk.

Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) as single congregations embarking on putting up new church buildings is an increasingly rare phenomenon. The financial pressure on most



denominations today mean building a new church is unusual when so many in other contexts are facing closure. The story of Great Notley is one of determination, clear vision and a desire to see a building be flexible and ultimately serve the community.

<https://cte.org.uk/dynamic-women-pivotal-in-ecumenical-church-plant/>

OUR FRIEND, SUE.

On Sunday 6th October our Church had a celebration for our Minister, Rev. Sue King. Sue has been our Minister for the past five years and is now retiring. Her commitment has been evident in all aspects of our church life, be it organisation, services, prayer, practical/emotional support, social activities, or just having fun.

Sue was presented with cards, flowers and presents (including two beautiful bookmarks one of which was engraved) from the church members.

As a church family we consider ourselves very lucky as Sue is actually staying with us as a Church Steward! So we will still benefit from her commitment, hard work and humour which will be much appreciated.

REPORT ON ART & CRAFT FAIR, HARVEST SUPPER AND HARVEST SERVICE 28 and 29 SEPTEMBER 2024

The 3 Churches in Chelmsford invited the Circuit to:-

A: an Art & Craft Fair at Trinity, Chelmsford 10am – 4pm on Saturday 28 September

B: a Harvest Supper at Moulsham Lodge 7pm on Saturday 28 September

C: the Harvest Service at Trinity on Sunday 29 September

The aim of the Art & Craft Fair was to encourage members of the Circuit and especially those of the 3 Chelmsford Methodist Churches to get together to produce items for the Harvest Service to take place next day at Trinity. About 20 people came and those who did found it enjoyable and some learnt new skills.

Items worked on through the workshops included: singing, drama, prayers, making woollen and material fruit and vegetables for decorating the Church, flower arranging, cake decorating, making a mural, making music, and making sweets. Also provided were a treasure hunt and messy church – both for children and families mainly.

The workshops produced really good work and this was demonstrated during the Sunday Service to excellent effect. Afterwards the congregation got to sample the cakes that had been decorated and the sweets that had been made!

The Harvest Supper was well attended by approximately 59 guests who were charged £5 each. After all expenses were paid, £118 – which included donations received at the Supper and the Harvest Service – was sent to the Chelmsford Foodbank. Although all those who incurred expenses eg for food and materials for the Art & Craft Fair, were offered reimbursement, it appears that many if not all donated their contributions freely.



Sew/Knit/Needlework Workshop



The Harvest Loaf



The Music Workshop



Making the Mural



In the Room for Prayers



Time to make sweets!



More in the Prayer Room



Helping in the Kitchen



Use it however you like....

I wrote it partly because Denise's mother was a sufferer, and I noted some of her symptoms; also by speaking with a friend who worked in dementia care home, and talked about the colours of the carpet helping guide patients to particular rooms...

**Green Room by
Stephen Kingsnorth**

As comfort, night time malted
drink,
a pattern followed, by the clock,
without good reason to disown -
why would I end the day alone?

I'm told that change is all
around,

I'm not an island to myself,
or I'll be simply left behind,
which is my lot - as I remind.

So change marks growth, from
seed to bloom, but do core

values yet remain,
the mannerisms, polite style,
respect, courtesy, second
mile?



While yes, there's much
so strange to me,
it is routine, my leading star,
for I need anchor, taking strain,
a secure hold, less binding chain.
They have my ways mechanical,
when customary more my frame;
I sense my five alone will guide,
but well-worn paths from synapse hide?

Now dado, carpets, green I see;
this path I'm sure goes to my room.
But when the bell chimes in my head,
those corridors are meat and bread.
So here I am at bed and board,
with folks uncertain who they are;
that night time malted drink my own,
so I'll not end this day alone.

**Thank you Mike Fogg for sending this in
for the newsletter.**

HARVEST AT HALSTEAD

It is that time of year when leaves on the trees change their colours to red/gold so, it must be Harvest Time!

We held our annual Harvest Festival Service led by Sue Johnson on the 6th October. There was a lovely supply of goodies which will be passed to the Food Bank and the Halstead Day Centre. We all enjoyed Sue's service as usual, and we sang some apt and beautiful hymns.

In the kitchen our events team were hard at work preparing a lovely lunch for everyone who attended the service, and the homemade desserts were delicious (they always go down well!)

We were pleased that Pam Cutmore and David Halls could join us as both have problems that have stopped them from driving. The church was trimmed with flowers and the feeling of "all are welcome" was prevalent on the day.

We send a huge Thank You to our Catering Team for the superb lunch and all the clearing-away afterwards, with extra hands from Jasmine, Gabby and Abbi. Thanks again to all who donated food – Here's to next year!



Spirituality, Scripture and Conflict

**Tuesday 11th February 2025 or Tuesday 24th June
9.30am to 3.30pm on zoom**

**Deepening our understanding of the wisdom and impact of
scripture in managing change and transforming conflict.**

Book your place here:

11th February: <https://SSC110225.eventbrite.co.uk>

24th June: <https://SSC240625.eventbrite.co.uk>



SCAN ME

**Contact Brec Seaton:
seatonb@methodistchurch.org.uk**





Bible study on Romans

Just to say we finished the second half of the bible study on Romans in September and early October, with a face-to-face group in Trinity and an online group in the ether. The photograph below was captured by Mark Pengelly at the penultimate face-to-face session.

A big thankyou to Jim Lowe and Mark who led sessions whilst I was on holiday. I think we all found the video presentations very watchable and uplifting, resulting in challenging and informative discussions, even though Mark, in his inimitable style thought that they were posing the wrong questions for discussion sometimes!

For the future I have a cunning plan for another bible study in Lent and will reveal all in the next edition of this august publication!!

Mike Fogg

This is such an important subject and can affect us all.

It will be an interesting talk.

Book Early!



CIRCUIT LADIES AFTERNOON TEAS 2024

Tuesday 19th November

Staying Safe Online—Barry Linton,
Cyber & Digital Support Volunteer

Essex Police

2pm at Trinity Methodist Church, CM1 2XB

Price £5.00 per person

Please highlight any special dietary requirements.

Book by Wednesday 13th November beforehand.

Judy Molyneux (01245) 465252

Janet Wintle (01245) 252146

**This is a very important subject and
'Circuit Ladies' welcome men on this occasion.**

3Generate 2024

More than 1,600 children and young people aged 4-18 years old, 560 leaders and 340 volunteers from across the Connexion attended 3Generate, the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly. This year's 3Generate was held at the NEC, Birmingham from Friday 4 to Sunday 6 October.

3Generate is a vibrant weekend of fun and worship and this year saw over 2000 children and youth leaders attending. It started on Friday evening with icebreakers and a welcome session which set the tone for the weekend. Throughout the weekend speakers, artists and musicians shared their inspiring stories and encouraged those taking part to share their own.

“The event is about children and young people tuning into God, the world and each other, listening to what God is calling them to do now: taking action and making a difference in their community, the Methodist Church and the world. 3Generate offers the unique opportunity for them to explore how they can make a difference on their own, with their friends or at their church.”



Click on the link below for the full article.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/news/3generate-2024-methodist-children-and-youth-assembly/>



How can we be kinder to our planet this Christmas?

Re-use cards and wrapping. Help reduce the huge amount of trees that go into making Christmas tags by re-using old Christmas cards. Recycle the section that carries the greeting, cut out the picture and use that as a tag. You could use fabric remnants and ribbons to make simple, drawstring gift bags in various sizes. Use these for your family and close friends and they could be reused for years to come. Recycled brown paper has a much lower ecological footprint than Christmas wrapping paper. Could your church display one card from each person?

Gifts – Try to avoid ‘stuff’ that people don’t want. How about tickets to an event or a promise of some time? Consider ethical toiletries, plants/seeds or food, something made from recycled materials, a sustainable alternative to single use items or even a charity gift. You could combine a bar of fairtrade chocolate with a charity gift of cocoa trees (or some other combination).

Decorations – Buy decorations that you can reuse or use natural materials such as holly and ivy. If you have a real tree remember to recycle it with the Farleigh Hospice collection service <https://www.farleighhospice.org/events/christmas-tree-recycling-2>

Food – Try to include more vegetables and vegetarian food. Store leftover food in reusable pots or wax wraps (not cling film) and find recipes to use it up. Don’t forget to boil up the turkey carcass for some delicious stock for soup or casseroles.

Crackers – Avoid crackers with plastic toys that will just be thrown away. You could even try making your own.

Dim the lights but not the joy! – If buying new lights, consider LED or solar versions.

Buy locally - **The Art Place Chelmsford** Meadows Shopping Centre, Chelmsford. 75 percent of the money goes back to the artist, 25 percent to the charity Ideas Hub who helps a lot of people in need.

Support charities

<https://embraceme.org> Shop ethically with our range of unique gifts, many of which are Fairtrade, fairly-traded or eco-friendly. All proceeds help support our Christian partners in the Middle East as they work to transform lives and restore dignity for excluded and marginalised communities.

<https://www.goodgifts.org> Good gifts that offer practical help for people in need in the UK or overseas. You can buy a goat for a community recovering from the effects of war, an hours respite for the carer of a disabled child or provide hearing tests and hearing aids for a child in Africa.

<https://www.worldlandtrust.org> Donate £5 to plant a tree. The world loses the equivalent of 31 football pitches of forest every single minute.

A Mediterranean Interlude

We like our home so much we haven't really done much foreign travel apart from necessity/family visiting. Somewhat reluctantly we were persuaded to jet off to Mallorca for a week, earlier this month. Mallorca is actually similar in size and shape to Devon, with a slightly larger population, and warmer weather, also an acute water shortage. There is a mountain range to the north, a central plain, ports, towns and villas dotted around. You can't drink the tap water, you might see some olive trees, goats, and polytunnels, as well as cyclists, solar panels. We understood there was occasionally a groundswell of local opinion in opposition to tourists, and coming from the West Country, we are familiar with that sentiment, which occurs in some of the nationalistic parts of Wales too.

I hadn't been anywhere in Europe, since we ferried over to the Hook of Holland, and cycled round Holland when we were first married; I can't remember going into a Catholic Church, since our Scout troop went to Normandy in 1972 (reverse chronology). I am not sure how "trip advisor" channelled us into the Church of St James Alcudia but there we went, and indeed were almost glad to do so. That is, if you like your church interior to be a feast for eyes that appreciate visual wealth. The altar and the side chapels, were perfectly baroque and greatly lavished with ecclesiastical bling, with a moderate inset wooden carving of Jesus hanging on the crucifixion cross. The Santo Cristo chapel is grandiose: stained glass windows, sculptures, gilded wood, huge dark paintings depicting other early Saints being painfully martyred. It seemed that there were side chapels and galleries offset in nearly every direction of the compass. There was a museum which also had sacred works of great value and racks of clerical vestments in nearly all the colours of the rainbow. So it went on.

Two days later, there I am in Witham church: plain brick walls, clear glass windows, 70's stylised "empty cross" behind me. At one time I remember, there was a robed choir, to balance the electronic organ. Never forget the drinkable tap water served at the back. That Sunday the lectionary verses included:

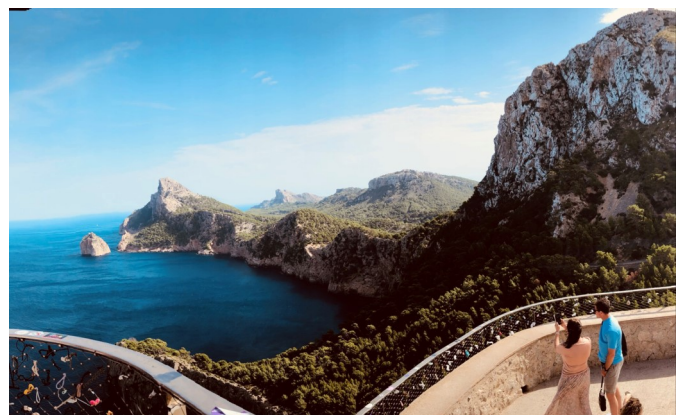
Hebrews 4: 12 For the word of God is living and active

Not then: carved into gilded wood, sewn into colourful clothes, painted into sad scenes.

Mark 10 tells us: "Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God."

We can't readily identify our treasure in heaven, but we can rejoice in the richness and variety in the whole church of God, and it's common heritage.

John R Clemo 22.10.24



Equipping for Equality

A development session for those passionate about
Justice, Dignity and Solidarity

Equality Impact Assessments explained

Thursday 16th January

7pm - 9pm

on Zoom

Led by Bevan Powell, Director of Inclusion

Enhance your consultation and change processes through the use of Equality Impact Assessments. Come along to hear more about the value of Equality Impact Assessments and how you might use them in your context. Bevan and Stuart will share stories of the difference they have made so far, and there will be opportunities to ask any

questions you have about them.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/equality-impact-assessments-explained-registration-1016634600457?aff=oddtcreator>

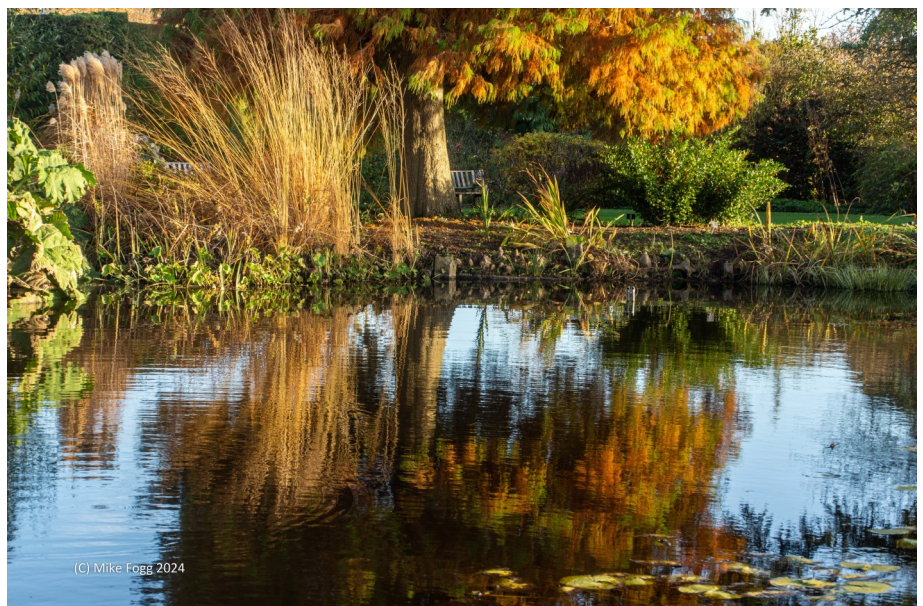
AUTUMN IMAGE

This image (Hyde Hall 4327) was captured at RHS Hyde Hall on a bright November afternoon in 2021 and features the upper pond, the one in front of the house on the hill. I am standing with the house behind me and looking at the far corner of the pond and the richness of the autumnal colour on view. There are golden reflections of the tree leaves, in fact there is more of the tree in the pond than there is above the water!

When I am playing with my camera, I love to catch reflections in water and here the tall grass, golden in real life, is slightly browner in the water, as are the leaves on the tree. This may be due to the ripples on the pond interrupting the image and causing more darkness to be seen.

There is a supporting cast of tree trunk and greenery, some of which makes its way into the pond reflections and two empty seats ready for those who wish to sit back and enjoy what autumn has to offer.

Mike Fogg



(C) Mike Fogg 2024

An introduction to unconscious bias



Unconscious Bias Training

Wednesday 6th November 2024 at 2pm, online

Thursday 3rd April 2025 at 10am, online

An Introductory Unconscious Bias training session, run for members and leaders of the Methodist Church in Britain

Learn more: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/387493412227...>

Mandatory training for all Circuit Stewards, Church Stewards and those working with families/ children. Full list on The Methodist Website.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/the-inclusive-methodist-church/training-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/mandatory-edi-training-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>

What is unconscious bias?

'Unconscious bias refers to a bias of which we are unaware and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.' Hidden biases have the power to undermine and derail our desire to act justly, and fairly towards other people and lots of areas in our decision making. eg, when it comes to recruitment, promotion, and openness to new sources of ideas. It is possible to be unconsciously biased regarding disability, religion, race, gender, age, social class, and more.

We will be using the video resources for introducing unconscious bias which is now available on the Methodist Church Website.

The resources can be found at: [Introduction to Unconscious Bias – for church councils, circuit meetings and other groups - Methodist Church](#)

The online session will include watching the videos and joining in small group conversation/reflection following each of the 3 video clips.

The reading/study material which is required before and after the session will be sent to participants once they have booked a place and the booking period has closed. When booking your place, please select which session you will be attending.



Full Brochure for 2024—2025

https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/Learning_Network_Brochure_September_2024.pdf

Also on the Circuit Website

<https://www.chelmsfordcircuit.co.uk/admin6/training/learning-network-guide/>

Many thanks for all those who have supported the Circuit Newsletter by sending in articles and sharing the newsletter with colleagues, friends and family. I really appreciate your support. Karen

NEXT CIRCUIT MEETING

7.15pm 9.45AM TILL MIDDAY

SATURDAY 8TH MARCH—TRINITY METHODIST

Circuit Administrator: Karen Murrell.

Email: karen.murrell@chelmsfordcircuit.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/chelmsfordcircuit>

<http://www.chelmsfordcircuit.co.uk>

‘Share your news’

**Deadline for
Jan/Feb 2025
by Mid December**