

THE WORK OF GOD

CHELMSFORD CIRCUIT

God's Work,
Our Hands



Year Ending

September 2021

BROOMFIELD

We opened the church for services in September 2020 and a number of our members returned though others decided to wait until we no longer had to wear masks and sit away from one another. Then Essex entered Tier 3 and we decided to return to relying on online services. Christmas as we had planned it was put on hold but we did carry on with outreach to the community. Two Xmas trees were put up on the forecourt alongside a nativity scene and people were invited to take socially distanced walks to view the candle lit message of Hope in a time of darkness. Dianne put together Messy Church bags to remind children of the Christmas message and, as usual, gifts of flowering plants were distributed to the over 80s linked to our church. Feedback from all these activities was very encouraging.

As a church we learned to gather via zoom and two Lent Courses were run online by Dianne (Holy Habits) and Hilary (Woven). Hilary also distributed course material and feedback to those who were not online but wanted to join in with the themes of the Woven course, Both courses were greatly appreciated by all who took part. Dianne organised Messy Church bags for Easter and Easter gift bags to remind those of our members who were not online that they were in our thoughts. Encouraged by the success of the Xmas display, Caroline and Hilary created a beautiful Easter Garden on the forecourt and a cross was displayed with the suggestion that members of the community add flowers as a gesture of thanks or in memory of loved ones.

Since Easter, following the lead of Rev Mark and Sheridan Pengelly, we have registered to become an Eco Church. We are in the early stages but we are promoting it through our services and the Overcomers Group, which meets on alternate Wednesday mornings, has been focusing its efforts on encouraging us to act positively in the face of Climate Change. For the past 6 weeks Hilary has been leading us in a biblical reflection of our duty to look after God's world, with suggestions as to how to make small changes – to focus on what we can do rather than what we cannot. These reflections have been distributed to all our members and adherents who are online and hard copies have been delivered to those who are not.

Ideas from this course have been used to put together Messy Church bags which went out to families in July. These encourage our link families to appreciate the natural world and we hope that some of the craft work produced can be used in a Harvest display in September. At the same time we hope to restart our zoom house group as a way of thinking about the challenges ahead and how our Christian faith can be used to encourage us and the surrounding community to develop more sustainable life styles.

Patricia Platt

CC BRAINTREE

At Christ Church Braintree we have been busy planning our **Hope Mission** taking place throughout August, September and October in two areas of Braintree. We started by Prayer Walking the streets over four evenings – asking God to be at work in the lives of the people living in those areas.

We have also been putting together Packs of Hope to be delivered through the letter-box of 900 homes on the streets where we have been focussing our prayers. In September an invite will be taken to each house for our **Community Hope Event** which we are holding at a school local to the area. This event will be in October and will involve food, music and a talk from Simon Pinchbeck – a man who has an amazing life story of being a police officer who turned to a life of crime and then became a Christian.

We recognise that, whilst it is good to invite people to join us at our services, we also need to be seen going to meet them where they are. We are hoping and praying that after such a difficult year, local people will take up our offer of bringing them some renewed hope.

Alongside our Nursery we have been able to host an online **Parenting Course** which was successful. We had a number of couples and single-parents doing the course which would not have been possible unless doing online because childcare would have been an issue. We decided to offer this online because of the pandemic but it worked out to be a bonus that we had not thought of.

Some of our **Home Groups** have continued to meet online over the past year which has been a great blessing. We ran a **Lent Course** called 'He Chose the Nails' by Max Lucado which was well attended and then followed this up with Holy Week reflections on YouTube.

Our two congregations have been meeting together for the last few months, but we will be beginning two services again from September. We have installed new equipment to enable us to continue **live-streaming** our services and we hope that this will continue to be a helpful way of including folk who cannot attend in person.

Our **local foodbank** has been able to keep going throughout the lockdown so that people who have been really struggling to provide for themselves have been supported. We are so thankful to the team of volunteers who have provided this resource in our community.

The weekly lunch-club and craft-club restarted before the summer, and we are delighted that many more of our **support groups**, including A.A. and Bereavement group, will be re-starting in September.

Rev. David Sebley

HALL STREET

I reckon that all our thoughts about the past year will probably all start with approximately the same words. "What a strange year it has been." Indeed, it has been strange and although starting to move back to a bit of normality it is still far from being as it was a couple of years ago. We have our Sunday services back although not as they were, but we have still not restarted our mid-week gatherings. We still have services without music and miss the great talents of our pianist Katie Marsh very much. Some of our good friends are still isolating and some have been very poorly, and we do pray that there will be a time when we can all gather together again. We tend to keep in close contact with the latest news via the telephone and the newsletters from our minister. We are delighted to have an extra one or two joining with us on a Sunday and have had some excellent services provided by ministers and local preachers. The churches and groups that use our building have also now started to get back into the swing of things. We at Hall Street wish you all good health and many blessings and may we all be ready for what the coming days bring.

Mike Shelbourne

HALSTEAD

The “Work of God” at Halstead

What a joy it is to be able to worship together again! Here at Halstead we are back to worship in the church building, carefully observing extra cleaning procedures, and other advice regarding how we can be as safe as possible by observing social distancing and so on. But we are back – and, without boasting, I want to share the news that the numbers attending worship are about the same - and sometimes more - than pre-pandemic. We have been very aware of the support of being part of a circuit, and grateful to those who have given their time and talents to advise us on various practical matters – you know who you are! - and I must mention a church neighbour, who does not join us for worship, but who has kept our grounds in immaculate order.

Throughout these past difficult months, we have shared worship together via a printed service delivered, or sent by post or email. Some of us have been able to extend our times of worship by linking in to other churches via YouTube, or streamed services. Like everyone else, our church family has been through sad times – funerals, illnesses, missed times of celebration – but we have shared as best we can, and have cared for one another via phone calls, cards, and chats at the door when appropriate. How I miss being able to visit people in their homes and share tea – and hopefully, cake!

As we came to the ending of most restrictions, we had the great joy of a wedding which had been postponed twice, but eventually celebrated - not without some anxiety on the part of Revd. Sue, working with the new registration “schedule” for the first time.

So, “We will praise Him for all that is past – and trust Him for all that’s to come”.

Revd Sue King

MALDON

God at work in Maldon Methodist Church

Having to leave the glass sliding door open onto the high street has brought with it the noise of the traffic. However, as we have a speaker in the foyer, it has also brought with it people that stop and listen and even sit outside in the forecourt on the bench and listen to the singing and the word of God. Never underestimate what God can do. His ways and thoughts are greater than our ways and thoughts.

We have had to say farewell to David and Gill as they move into ministry. And Lena a long standing member that has moved home to be closer to her children. Sadly, we also said farewell to long standing members of Maldon that have passed away. We also have had the joy of new people become part of the community of faith. Our worship has taken on a newness, blending the old hymns and modern songs together and we have been celebrating communion in a different way that is inclusive and binding all together as one body.

We have had fellowship with each other and with God in a new way every week through most of the year using zoom, which has kept us connected to each other and to God in times of lockdown and passed lockdown. We have had time of fellowship by planning picnics in the park, that have been a joy and we will continue to have them. As a Maldon section, we have had fun zoom quiz evenings, and this has allowed us to meet others from the other churches in the section.

With the lifting of restrictions in July we have been able to restart our toddler group which has been a blessing to many mums that have been stuck at home for far too long. We closed the year with a huge celebration as a lady that discovered the joy of knowing Jesus as her Lord and Saviour wanted to be baptised. We had a full immersion baptism and as one person said afterwards I could see as the lady was baptised how all the stress of life was removed from her face. God is not only good he is amazing and cares for each person in a unique and special way.

We wait in anticipation to see what Christ is going to do in His children and through them in the next year.

Rev Barry Allen

MOULSHAM LODGE

The work of God at Moulsham Lodge for year ending August 2021

Covid19 has continued to dominate the past year's activities at Moulsham Lodge, but we have continued to do whatever we can to keep our fellowship in touch whether through worship services whenever permitted, The continuing online services have been very much appreciated, especially by those housebound for various health reasons.

Our MLMC news emails to all members online is now only sent out when there is something to share rather than as a daily issue but our monthly magazine, The Messenger, has continued to share news and views throughout the pandemic.

With several easing of restrictions phases, our Covid Group has worked to make worship and our premises as comfortable and safe as possible.. One way has been to reduce the number of seats in the church to around 40, sufficient for current congregations, but allowing more space to move around. This now has the effect of making the church feel "full" and "together" As congregations hopefully increase as the situation eases through the winter months, then extra seats will be added.

Our Church Council in June approved our registering as an Eco Church and we will be launching this fully at our Harvest Service in September, but we have been using our monthly Messenger to share Eco news and practical things we can do to "save our planet." Our next initiative will be to work towards gaining the A Rocha awards and hopefully registering as a fair trade church as well..

We now also have our own Zoom facility and will be seeking ways of using this, especially for winter meetings. Throughout spring and summer, we have been using Zoom for a bi-monthly Bible Study, but recently we reverted to meeting in the church once again.

September will see the opening of some of our organisations and groups after 18 months of being closed though our Brigades have managed throughout the year using Zoom and only latterly face to face meetings. They also held a camp this year, within the allowed restrictions.

One highlight of the year, and a recurring one we envisage, is the appearance of bee-orchids (pictured) on our small patch of grass at the back of the church! These are a protected plant and meant that we could not mow the area until the end of July!



As we enter the new Methodist year in September we look forward to where God is leading us. Early in September we will be having a good spring clean of our premises, disposing of unwanted clutter, and looking seriously how we will "do church" following 18 months of total disruption which has forced us to seek new ways of doing things whilst embracing new technologies. We will seek the positives and not dwell on the past; change is here to stay!

Blessings
Clive Pickett
Retiring Senior Steward.

REALITY CHURCH

HATFIELD PEVERAL

Throughout the past year it has been good to share in inspiring services every week “on line”, thanks to the dedication of many members who willingly gave up their time to combine their talents and IT skills.

However we are pleased to be back now meeting face to face (with or without masks) to share in Sunday worship, more or less as normal.

Barry and Sandy have continued through the academic year to run the Monday (lunch time) Club at St. Andrew’s junior school,(whenever easing of Covid restrictions allowed.) This has proved to be very popular with the children in years 3-5 when an average of 20 enthusiastic pupils attended each session. At the close of this summer term the children met on the recreation ground for fun & games and a picnic. Their parents were also invited, giving them and our church members an opportunity to meet and socialize. Now that the schools are returning, we hope the children will remember the fun they had learning about Christian values and bring along new friends this term.

Continuing with outreach we have also considered the adults by holding a “Stitch to Enrich” group led by Jane Cook, who is very talented in stitch craft of all types. This is a therapeutic group, for while focusing on the joy of stitching we have the opportunity to chat freely, share problems or good news and start friendships. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month, 2—4pm at the Duke of Wellington and all are welcome.

Looking forward, Barry is encouraging us to commit ourselves to “dig ditches” to provide a sound foundation for further growth of our church.

Aileen French

ST AUGUSTINE'S

Dear Friend's,

It has been a strange year at St Augustine's coping with restrictions from Covid. Having been in Lock down, then opening up cautiously we planned exciting services for the Christmas period, but one by one they were changed and we returned to Zoom services. Our Christmas Nativity service was one of the highlights as the Sunday School leaders cleverly arranged a video piecing together videos e-mailed by the children.

We said a big thank you to our two Sunday School leaders, Catherine and Charlotte, who have engaged children with inspiring sessions for many years. They have decided to concentrate on the older young people in the church. So we are praying for new leadership, although their shoes will be difficult to fill.

As a church we have developed our 'Mission Statement' which is being used to guide our way forward. This has been shared and discussed with the congregation:-

'Led by the Holy Spirit and underpinned by prayer, we seek to share God's love as shown by the teachings of Jesus.

We aim to be a nurturing church family which offers spiritual growth, varied styles of worship and social interaction for all ages.

As an ecumenical, inclusive and diverse church we aim to show love and support to the wider community and be stewards of God's creation, working towards a sustainable world'.

In response to this, we have started our journey to become an Eco Church. Also, in order to show God's love to the wider community, we have begun serving Cream Teas once a month with the idea of getting to know more local people and having a fun, family afternoon. In an effort to care for God's world, a group of us have formed 'Springfield Wombles', and we have fun collecting litter every Wednesday evening.

Like most churches, we are now meeting in the church, after many months of Zooming and while the weather is good, we are meeting outside. We do value the benefits of Zooming, particularly for those who cannot access the church, and so we have an evening service, called 'Cherish' on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month led by Rev Caroline or Val.

P.C.N [Progressive Christian Network], has continued by Zoom on the 2nd Sunday of each month. Thanks to Jenny Murphy who has been co-ordinating meetings.

When we first started 'Lock Down' in the Spring of '21, we began 'Pause 4 Prayer', which became a zoom prayer meeting valued by those of us who took part. We were able to take time out in the middle of the week to pray together and meet with friends. This special time has taken a break during the summer, and hopefully will resume in September.

During Lent, we decided to raise money for Water Aid, and through sponsorship we walked to Jerusalem! We did this by collectively adding the miles we walked in Chelmsford, on a weekly basis, and followed a route through Europe, ending up in Jerusalem on Mother's Day. It was a great effort with friends and family joining us from London, Ireland, Scotland and even in Haifa in Israel. We raised over £2,000, and some members were awarded blue Water aid shoe laces, or Easter Eggs for fun prizes.

One of our first services back in the Church was a very special 'First Communion' for 11 year olds, Imogen and Amelia. We welcomed them onto the next stage of their journey walking and learning about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We were able to renew our faith journey, and pray that Jesus will continue to be by our side as we work towards being a light in North Springfield, with God's help.

Pamela Scammell

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS

Church resumed in August of 2020 with Covid restrictions in place. We quickly had a good attendance and it was so lovely to be back in Church. Church remained open until the National Lockdown in November. Obviously none of the usual special services took place - Harvest, Remembrance day, and most of the Christmas activities. We did enjoy a joint service with the Anglicans on Christmas Day before the Church was permanently closed again until Palm Sunday.

We made a donation to CHESS in lieu of the usual Harvest Collection.
(Charity for the Homeless in the Chelmsford area)

“Open the book” project was halted due to Covid but we hope to start that again in Sept. The Parish Nurse initiative has also been suspended due to Covid but we are still hopeful that it will go ahead.

An enjoyable Ecumenical Lent group took place via zoom.

We enjoyed a postponed World Day of Prayer event in June. All the Churches in Woodham got together outside for a celebration of World Day of Prayer.

We are working towards obtaining an eco Church status. We have a weekly recommendation in the notices to help reduce carbon footprint.

We have been fortunate to continue enjoy a great variety of services and activities on Zoom. South Woodham enjoyed our weekly Fellowship zoom meetings. We have also been fortunate to share in the Anglican led weekly zoom prayer meetings and have been welcome to join all their online services.

We have continued with Worship and Outreach meetings and Joint Church Council via Zoom.

During Lockdown members kept in regular contact with those who lived on their own and supported them in a socially distanced way.

Together with the Catholics and Church of England congregations we have had WiFi installed in the Church and a new Camera so we are able to Live stream our services.

Most of our regular activities have continued albeit in a different way. These include:

Foodbank

Weekly prayer /house group

Retiring collections for disaster funds as appropriate.

Action for Children Collecting boxes

Tithe committee - we regularly financially support local ventures .

We regularly support Medicines Sans Frontiers.

Tricia Tutin

TRINITY

Our Work of God

No sooner had we welcomed Mark and Sheridan to Trinity than we were into another lockdown. Hardly the start we and they had been looking forward to! Throughout the lockdowns, Mark, Ramona and several local preachers have continued to give us services via 'YouTube' for which we have been very grateful and our heartfelt thanks go out to them. These have attracted a vast congregation from far and wide, including former churches where Mark has preached, former members who have moved away from the circuit as well as parents of some of our own members.

All church activities have had to be cancelled and we were unable to mark Christian festivals in the usual way. Lockdown also meant that user groups were unable to meet in the church buildings in the normal way, although we were able to allow the AA groups to gather to a limited extent whilst complying with the restrictions which were in place.

Pastoral groups have been able to keep in touch with each other and have been able to assist members in a variety of ways.

We were able to re-start services in the church building to a limited extent, subject to attendees booking in advance and sitting well-spaced with windows open. Since 25 July, we are now able to attend with fewer restrictions and, even, sing hymns behind masks! We still have a one-way system in operation and the collection is deposited on a plate rather than a bag being passed around. Coffee is again being served in The Link. These arrangements will be reviewed at the next Church Council.

Trinity now looks forward to life getting 'back to normal' but I don't think we are sure what 'normal' means anymore.

Eddie Cassels

WITHAM

God at work in Witham Methodist Church

Witham left no stone unturned in getting people back to worship together face to face. They were the first to reopen their doors each time after a lockdown. Thanks to the dedication of the stewards who went the extra mile in making sure that the building was safe and secure for worship.

Witham like Maldon have had to learn new ways to worship and new ways to celebrate around the Lord's Table of grace and mercy. They have embraced the new and worship has become a blend of old and new.

Witham were also the first to reopen their doors to the groups that need to meet face to face the most. Like the A.A and Cocaine

Throughout the past year people from Witham Methodist have continued to serve the community through Foodbank and care of those who were in isolation. Being the light of Christ in a broken community.

Witham has had a weekly zoom fellowship, which has allowed those in isolation to be connected with others. Witham participated with great enthusiasm in the Section's quiz evenings.

The community of faith in Witham throughout the year have continually cared for and encouraged each other through a 'Whats app' group, visits and phone calls. They have made the word of God as written in Hebrews 10 verse 25 a reality. *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another."*

Rev Barry Allen