



THE WORK OF GOD

BELIEVE IN THE ONE HE SENT

John 6:28-29

The Work of God

In the

Chelmsford Circuit

September 2024

BROOMFIELD

Work of God at Broomfield

Sunday Services

Broomfield friends have led a number of Local Arrangement services, and it is encouraging that folk are willing to volunteer to participate in such services. The Overcomers group love to share their inspiring personal stories of faith and to lead worship with their singing, under the creative leadership of Hilary.

Taking our place in the Community

We have continued to raise the profile of Broomfield Methodist Church (BMC) in the village by participating in the annual Christmas tree festival, where our eco tree was well received, the village Flower Festival and the village fete where Messy Church had a marquee with craft activities based on the Olympics. We were delighted that Broomfield was awarded the accolade of being a toilet twinned village as BMC spread the word throughout the village, inspiring other groups to twin their toilets too. All these activities have given us the opportunity to speak to folk attending, answer their questions and spread the love of Jesus.

Eco Church

We have continued to raise the profile of Eco Church with our members and friends through our services, notice board, prayers, and church notices. Friends are continuing to bring their plastic flowerpots for recycling and tools to send to TWAM (Tools with a Mission), which will be our church charity next year. Our property managers continue to look at ways we can make our church heating and lighting more energy efficient and sourcing fair trade tea and coffee as well as greener cleaning products.

Outreach

We continue to serve Madalayne Court, our local care home, with a service once a month and a chance to meet and chat with the residents. Mark has taken Communion Services, which have been very much appreciated by residents and staff alike.

We continue to provide space for the 3B's (Broomfield Baby Bereavement Support Group) to meet and have given permission for them to refurbish and furnish a room in the church hall where families can find a safe and supportive space to share their feelings of loss and pain. The Church Hall is also used once a month on a Friday for a toddler group for the families. During Baby Loss Awareness Week and at Christmas time families are invited to come along to our candlelit church to light their own candles and quiet music offers them the space to reflect and think about their children. The Peace Garden at the rear of the church hall is also well used by these families, another quiet space to remember and this is especially visited on difficult days such as birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day, Father's Day and at Christmas.

Messy Church continues to meet once a month and we now have around 20 families who eagerly await their invitation to register for the next service.

BROOMFIELD

This year we have explored the story of the man being lowered through the roof or over the balcony of the church in our case! We looked for Jesus when he went missing! We had breakfast with Jesus as well as reflecting on being salt and light and God's promises. We also celebrated Christmas and Easter, with the enthusiastic waving of palm leaves. We have a loyal congregation who come to Messy Church regularly and it's great to get to know them and welcome them to the church. Their enthusiasm is certainly infectious. In July we had a new venture with "Messy Church Goes Wild" where we took our families to the local woods and park to soak themselves in the beauty of God's creation.

Looking to the Future.

We continue to attend the meetings with our friends in Chelmsford from the other churches to explore a possible future where we can come together and share our resources more effectively.

We are looking at the possibility of developing a Messy Parents and Carers group with our Messy Church Families.

We are also looking at the possibility of setting up another Bereavement Support Group and we have been approached to host a Teenage Cancer Support Group by a friend of the church. The cosy newly refurbished room could provide a "Home" for such groups.

A new garden is in the planning stage, using the patio outside the Common room. Messy Church have made a bug hotel for the garden and were very excited as a ladybird explored the rooms in the hotel.

We have decided to adopt an Eco friendly project for our annual Church Charity.

Broomfield continues to face the challenge of the aging profile of those who are willing to take on the responsibility and commitment of leadership and needs to take some difficult and challenging decisions in the very near future.

CHRIST CHURCH BRAINTREE

CHRIST CHURCH BRAINTREE

Last Christmas, following the previous year's success, people from our church decided to go **Carol Singing** around the area close to the church. We handed residents a wooden angel decoration and invites to our Christmas services which was well received.

During 2024 we are focusing on Prayer and have used Pete Greig's course 'How To Pray' to explore this subject through our **Life Groups** – including our families and young people – to encourage us all in our prayer lives both individually and as a church.

We held our second **URLoved** event in February, where we shared a meal together and welcomed Ian from Tough Talk to tell his amazing, inspirational story.

Our Women's Ministry held a well-attended breakfast on 27 April with Diane Regan from Kintsugi Hope.

Our **Family Link Worker** has been developing relationships with the children's and family groups that meet in the church buildings. We held a **Summer Holiday Club** once again in August and 2023 saw the start of holiday **Family Fun Mornings** and **Wiggle Church**.

The **Fun Mornings** grew from an idea at our busy Thursday Tots groups which meet during term-time. We had heard the comment several times that they missed the group during the holidays – but as the Tots group was set up for 0-5 year olds and many parents have older children too, meeting during the school holidays in the same format wasn't the answer. So, we decided to set up a group for 0-11 year olds and their parents that was more structured and bible-based and, 1 year on, after 7 sessions (1 in each holiday and 2 during the summer) it is proving very popular.



We start the session with holding activities (mazes, wordsearch, colouring and some baby toys) while everyone is registering, and then we move to some beanbags where we watch a bible story on the screen, have a song and a game and finish with an interactive prayer activity before moving into the hall where the craft activities are set out. There are usually 6 or 7 different activities for them to choose from including a food- based activity, playdough and Duplo. The children and their adult can choose whichever activities they want to do for about 30 minutes and then we move to the tables set with snacks and share some food together including the food craft they have completed. During this time hot drinks are available for the adults too.

Each of the craft tables are manned by a volunteer – we are so lucky to have people at Christ Church who are enthusiastic about working with the children. We have also introduced a break out room where music is playing and there are small sensory boxes available as we have several children who have additional needs and find it hard to stay in the noisy craft environment.

After the session the crafts are displayed in the smaller hall where our Lunch club and Craft club members can enjoy them and see what we have been doing.



CHRIST CHURCH BRAINTREE



Our **Wiggle Church** sessions meet at 9.15am on the third Sunday of the month, offering half an hour of Bible stories, music, puppets and fun, for children aged 0-7 years. This then leads into our All Age Worship services, for which we now have an All Age Worship team.

Our **Youth** once again attend 'Dreaming the Impossible', a Christian camp especially for teenagers, in the summer. They came back buzzing! They ran a number of fundraising events through the year to help raise the funds to go and we are very grateful to the leaders who organised the trip and took them, and to all the congregation for supporting them through their fundraising events and through prayer. Following the summer, their Friday evening and Sunday morning sessions have been looking at bigger questions, at their request, for example: relationships, gender and sexuality; hypocrisy; suffering; as well as looking at prayer, how to read the Bible and find relevant passages, and a series on spiritual gifts. They led one of our Christmas services, looking at why God chose to reveal himself, in Jesus, first to the Shepherds.

They have also been involved in Eco church as you will read below.

We ran a **Bereavement Journey Course**, a course for anyone who has lost someone either recently or a while ago. These sessions encourage people to talk about their experience and find support and assistance in working on the grief they are experiencing. Our next Bereavement Journey evening course, a series of 7 sessions with film and discussion, will start on Thursday 12th September at 7.30pm. These sessions are for anyone who has been bereaved at any time. We will be holding a Bereavement Journey service later in the year.

Like many churches in the UK we, at Christ Church, have been looking at how we can make the way we use our premises more environmentally friendly and give ethical, user friendly advice to our congregation and those that use the building.

We are currently waiting for our Silver Award to be agreed but we thought we would share some of the things that we have worked on to get to this point.

Sometimes it is the little things that can make quite a difference. We are a large building that is used by a variety of organisations throughout the day and the policy had been that the last person to leave the building made sure that all the lights were turned off – We now encourage everyone to turn lights off when they leave a room and only to use those lights that they really need and not turn all the lights on in a room if they are not required. We also have 2 water heaters in the kitchens which again were switched on and left on for a

CHRIST CHURCH BRAINTREE

session even when drinks were only being made at the beginning of a meeting. We now encourage users to turn the water heater off when they have finished making drinks and not at the end of the meeting. These small changes have been taken on board by all users of the church buildings and are starting to make a difference to our energy usage and our bills.



We decided to provide a recycling area for some of the smaller items that are not always easy to recycle. These include stamps, which currently go to the RNIB, toner cartridges, which currently go to Colne Valley Cats protection, plastic writing implements which are recycled by Terracycle and medical blister packs which we take to the Refill shop in Chelmsford and Superdrug Pharmacies in Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds.

We have added more insect friendly plants to our very small garden area and our **Youth** group have built an insect hotel for us. Our Youth have also set up a **Fair Trade and Eco friendly stall** which runs every Sunday morning.



CHRIST CHURCH BRAINTREE

We would encourage all churches to consider the **Ecochurch** award. It has really made us look at all areas of church and where we can make improvements for our future and the future of our children.

We had an enjoyable **Puppet Training Day** and a number of our members attended to help out in future with our puppets at our All Worship services. We also use puppets at Wiggle Church.

We are one of the distribution centres for the **Braintree Area Foodbank** and the team hand out food every Thursday and Friday morning to those in need.

May we end with John 6:29 **“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”**

Linda, Nikki and Zelma (Prepared in David’s absence)

CHRIST CHURCH COGGESHALL

Christ Church, Coggeshall
Here to seek God, share Jesus and serve our communities

Christ Church Coggeshall

Sundays
@ 4 pm

**Joining together in
worship of our ever-loving
God**

We meet for a relaxed and informal worship service on Sunday afternoons. While many of our long-standing members would like to return to morning services, we are increasingly welcoming people who have other commitments on Sunday mornings. We also meet for prayer once a month, on Monday afternoons, and for a worship and prayer evening bi-monthly on Saturdays.

Our coffee morning and toddler group on Thursday mornings continue to be popular, and we seek other opportunities to engage with our community. We held a Christingle service in December, and invited a local choir to take part in our carol service, which was very well received.



Coggeshall has a Christmas market every year, at which we serve hot drinks and mince pies, and host a cake sale. This year we invited local charities, businesses and groups to contribute angels to our display. We also had a stall at the town summer festival again, which is always fun and a great way to meet people.

We are aware of the spiritual battle going on, and visions have confirmed how real that is in Coggeshall. We continue to faithfully pray that our congregation will increase in depth of faith and in number. And as well as praying that God will meet our needs (which we know he will do), this year we have been praying that He will bring through our doors those who need to be among us.

GT NOTLEY

What a year! 2023 marked the 25th anniversary of The Church in Great Notley. We began the year with a joyful silver jubilee service, with lots of friends and faces from CIGN past and present in attendance. It was a fantastic opportunity to thank people for their contribution in the life and witness of the church.

This year we were encouraged to see a number of people take significant steps of faith and belonging. We were delighted to host a confirmation service in April, in which four members of the congregation were confirmed. Later in August, we had two adult baptisms and three adults admitted to Church Membership.

The ministry team has also changed shape. Nikki Horsely was ordained deacon and began her curacy working across the Three Churches as well as continuing her work in school, and Roman Kukiewicz was licensed as an Associate Priest to the benefice. Our wonderful URC Minister David Sebley is currently taking a sabbatical, and we look forward to his return in September. We were also delighted to appoint a Benefice Administrator in September 2023. Lisa Gregson is an excellent addition to our team and has alleviated a significant amount of administration from the ministry team, which means they have more time for encouraging ministry and mission – e.g. dreaming and scheming!

As such, we have started a new initiative ‘Wiggle Church’, a monthly thirty-minute service for under 7s and their families. It has been well received and we are excited to see how it will grow.

We have also deepened our links with our local school, Notley Green, through a ministry of cake baking to bless the staff each week. There have been more opportunities to use the church with the school, not only for lessons but to host a school art exhibition which went really well.

We have also re-established links with our local nursing home and have a team that provides a monthly Holy Communion service there.

After a few challenging years, we were delighted to have a better financial year. We are grateful for God’s provision and generosity of Congregation on a gift day, as well as the hard work of our Treasurer, Lisa Scott.

GT NOTLEY

As we look to the future, we will be looking at doing some revisioning: how is God calling us to serve our community and grow in faith for the next 25 years – and beyond? We will be embarking on a season of waiting, listening and hearing to find out what God is preparing for us to do in Great Notley. So, we will be praying and discerning as a whole church throughout the summer to help us develop some priorities for mission and evangelism.

We worship a God who is able to do more than we can ask or imagine, so once again, we place ourselves and our church into God's hands, looking forward to the future with hope and expectancy.

Rev Rachel Prior



Wiggle Church



School Art Exhibition

HALSTEAD

We continue to be thankful that we can maintain our regular Sunday morning worship. We are delighted that our formal membership has increased slightly this year, with 3 of our regular worshippers asking to be made members.

We organise our own “taxi” journeys to church, with those who have cars enabling those who have no transport to come to Sunday worship - thank you, drivers!

We realise that we are some miles away from much of the circuit, and give special thanks to those preachers who are willing and able to come to lead worship here. We are blessed, too, by several of our members being willing to lead “local arrangement” services, usually based on a specific theme according to the diary date - so, Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, and so on.

The highlight of this past year was the celebration of 150 years of worship here in Halstead Methodist Church. We were delighted to welcome the Chair of this Methodist District, Rev’d David Chapman, who (without the aid of notes!) astounded us with the number and variety of other significant events which took place in the same year as our church here began.

We are always glad to be able to use our premises for other gatherings. The local photographic society meets here, we held a jumble sale recently (to raise much - needed funds) and got to know one of our neighbours when he asked to use our hall in order to practise his trombone..... And yes, the Safeguarding rules were, of course, adhered to.

We continue to support the local Foodbank, as well as supporting each other in practical and prayerful ways. Most worshippers stay for refreshments after our Sunday worship and join in the sharing of the joys and sorrows of our lives too, as we gather around the long table.

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

Rev Sue King

HATFIELD PEVEREL

“WORK of GOD” in HATFIELD PEVEREL METHODIST CHURCH from September 2023

The first major event for us, during the church calendar year, was a change of venue. During last September we had been considering changing our venue to enable us to be more visible within the community, so agreed to have a trial period of a few months, holding our services in one of the rooms at our village hall. The management have been most accommodating and helpful, setting up the room for us every Sunday. Our services continue to vary in format and content, keeping our worship fresh and inspiring and led by our very talented duo, -- Eddie on guitar and Jane leading the singing. We provide our own coffee before our services but afterwards we enjoy the advantage of being able to mingle with other folk in the community café.

This arrangement seems to be working well so we have recently agreed to make the contract permanent. Our new contact details are as follows:-

Email address -- hpmethodistchurch@gmail.com.

Website --- “Home - Hatfield Peverel Methodist Church (e-voice.org.uk)”.

Returning back to last year, we were pleased to be invited back once again in December, by the landlord of “The Duke” (one of our local pubs) to lead the customers in an evening of singing Christmas Carols.

On **Palm Sunday** we hosted a successful **Easter Craft event**, organised by Nicky and Jeff Hosking who invited the local brownies and their parents. They were encouraged to “have a go” at making a variety of crafts, all related to the various stages of the Easter story. The challenges were enjoyed by all ages and many asked “When is the next event”?

Throughout 2023/2024 we have continued with:-

* a fortnightly **Bible Study**. This has been well attended and is still inspiringly led by Jeff. He has encouraged many thoughtful discussions on the subjects of Rogues & Scoundrels in the Bible and is now planning a 4 part series called “There are no strong people” written by Jeff Lucas based on Samson.

* **Lunch Club** at St. Andrew’s Junior School.

Each Monday Barry & Ria bring Bible stories to life for the children, via videos, simple discussions and related craftwork. This quarter the children have seen some of the Miracles performed by Jesus and the Old Testament story of Gideon and have had fun making

HATFIELD PEVEREL

baskets with fish and bread, turning water into wine, shields, a mobile and God's eye weaving. The underlying aim is to teach the children that God loves every one of them.

* **Stitch 2 Enrich group.** This is still popular with village friends and church members, who are enjoying the opportunity to learn new embroidery techniques from our very skilled and patient instructor Jane Cook. Leading up to Christmas we were asked to make tree decorations for the Charity "United in Kind", who distributed them amongst lonely people in the community. Our small efforts to show "someone cares" were much appreciated by the recipients. As the name of the group implies, those who attend St 2 E are also enriched socially, as there is no pressure to stitch at all but just chat over a cup of tea if preferred, in a relaxed welcoming environment, in a corner of the community café within the Village hall.

* **Maintenance of the Junior School garden.**

John Clemo continues to volunteer on a weekly basis to work with groups of children keeping the garden tidy and teaching them how to look after the flowers and vegetables they grow. He also shows them how to do willow weaving which is very popular.

New Outreach ventures include:-

Participating in our Village Spring show --- We took part as a church last April, inspired by the **ST 2 E group**. Jane realized we had the potential to enter a good number of classes in the embroidery and craft sections. So between us we put in 18 different entries, considerably boosting the usual number, which pleased the organizers. We all enjoyed making our entries and achieved excellent results but equally importantly, it has helped us to be more visible in the community.

Encourage by this success, we are now planning to submit more entries in the **Autumn Show in October** preceding this, with a **Craft Event in September**, where young and old alike will be able to learn new skills then hopefully also enter their achievements into the show.

HATFIELD PEVEREL

Finally, on June 17th and 18th we took part in a very challenging but most rewarding **Outreach event instigated by Rev. Barry and Ria**. We would like to **thank them** for their vision and enthusiasm (and their encouragement to us to help) to provide all the children of our local Junior School, with the opportunity to take part in a **“Life Exhibition ”** A multi-media experience set up to encourage children to question, challenge and form their own opinions on the story of Jesus – from his birth and historic roots, his teachings and miracles to his death and resurrection.

This required a lot of planning in advance by Barry and Ria and much physical work by many members of our church, to set up and dismantle equipment and for some, to take on roles of leaders during the event. However, seeing all the children’s enthusiastic responses during the two days, made all the effort very worthwhile. They loved watching the Videos, using tablets with headphones, having simple discussions and doing computer voting. It was an amazing event, loved by the children and much appreciated by all the Teachers.

Barry & Ria then continued this outreach by taking the Life Exhibition to South Woodham Ferrers to set it all up again, with a new team of assistants, to give the children of Trinity St. Mary’s Primary School the same experience.

(More details of this resource, for anyone interested, are explained in the latest July/ August Circuit Newsletter)

Ria has asked for the following prayer to be included in this report;-

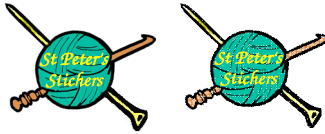
We give God praise and thanks for all who participated and worked so very hard to make this event a success. One can never underestimate the power of God at work in the lives of children through his faithful servants.

Thank you for your support and prayers in this work, Blessings, Ria Allen (School’s worker)

Aileen French

MALDON

Maldon Methodist Church



St. Peter's Stitches Knit-N-Natter group.

Warm Spaces

The group was started in the cafe at St. Peter's Hospital Maldon early 2022. In June of 2023 the cafe had to close due to health issues for the lady who ran it. After talking to the Church lettings secretary, Mark and Moira, two of our church members, invited the group to move to the church where they meet every Thursday morning.

In the autumn of 2024 we became an official Warm Space and now also provide a simple light lunch to all who come.

Not all who come knit. Some just come to natter. We have a couple of vulnerable people attend just for somewhere to go. Also two or three of the ladies who used to volunteer at the cafe come and deal with the teas and coffees for us.

We have had a couple of visits from Essex Police, one to talk about crime prevention and one to talk about fraud and scams.

One week a local district councillor came to talk about the proposed closure of St Peters hospital and to assist anyone who wanted to complete the consultation questionnaire on paper.

Another time Mark and Moira, who are a members of the Lions Club Of East Anglia Lion-ess, presented the Lion's 'Message In A Bottle' project and handed out bottles to anyone who wanted them. This is where you list your medication and allergies etc on a form which is stored in a plastic bottle in the fridge. In the event of a medical emergency the paramedics will have all the details they need if you are unable to speak.

We regularly have around 24/25 people in attendance.

MALDON

Everyone who wants to put a pound in the pot and when we have enough we give Julie Taylor the cash for another bleed control pack. She raises funds for these in memory of her grandson. Liam, who was knifed to death in an unprovoked attack at the age of 19. We are currently paying for one bleed kit per month.

Wesley Guild

Meet every other Wednesday at 2.30 pm and always start with a time of worship. We have various speakers who enrich our lives by telling us of their interests and experiences. We try to include items covering devotional, social, cultural and educational themes. We usually finish by saying The Grace together and enjoying a 'cuppa'.

Bible Study

At Maldon Methodist Church we joined in the Scripture Union Bible study of the Book of Revelation last year. It was a challenging but also an insightful and rewarding study which we all enjoyed.

This year we completed the study on the book of Romans. Every lesson was preached on for the first six lessons. This was enormously helpful as it prepared us in advance for each study. These studies came with a workbook and was presented by Andrew Ollerton via video.

The questions in the workbook help with the discussions at each session.

We completed the last four sessions on Romans during the month of May.

Our bible study group at Maldon have enjoyed these studies enormously and are looking forward to doing the next study.

Keyring

Meet on Tuesdays every week at 2.30pm. Previously this was a ladies group but we now include men as well. Each meeting has a different theme but we always begin with a short act of worship and end with refreshments.

The themes have included music, animals of the Bible, visits people have made, a funny look at ageing and most recently D-Day.

We share friendship and fellowship together in a safe place. Our numbers vary each week due to ill health or medical appointments but we always enjoy a time of fun, fellowship and refreshments. We celebrate each member's birthday.

MALDON

Mums and Tots

Meet every Monday during the school term for children from new born to 4 years of age. We have various ride on toys, dolls, prams, slide on the outside of the chairs where the mums, dads, grandparents sit. There is a corner for reading, puzzles and drawing. In the middle of the adult's ring there are other toys for the children to play with.

There are refreshments for the children and the adults, action songs, and lots of fellowship with the adults.

MOULSHAM LODGE

The work of God at Moulsham Lodge Methodist Church. 2023 2024

2023 2024 has been a very heartening time for our church. Our numbers have been increasing and our finances are looking improved on where they were during the Covid period. We have much to be thankful for.

In early October we held our Harvest and Brigades Parade service. This year the current economic climate is beginning to affect more and more people, not only increasing the number of visitors to the Chelmsford Foodbank but also reducing the donations provided. It was decided therefore that the focus of our collection would be the Foodbank. The response, as always, was magnificent and a substantial supply of gifts was later transported to the distribution centre. On the day before, a group of members offered to lay on a buffet style harvest lunch which was much enjoyed by those present.

Our church council met in mid October and continued to reflect on possible alternative ways of doing church within the four churches of the Chelmsford Section. Areas of discussion were geographical and demographical trends together with a suggestion posed by District to consider using the model of "one church several sites". The crux of this is that church buildings continue to be used for community and worship but run via one church council. There would be a shared team responsibility for some of the administrative functions, which divert so much time and effort. This is being looked at further by the team representing all four Chelmsford churches and a visit to such a site took place in March 2024.

We planned well in advance for our Christmas season commencing with an Advent Study, where we were delighted to additionally welcome some members from St Lukes church as we did again in early December for a joint Sunday service hosted by ourselves. Our Carol service the following week was again very popular, led by Mark and was a joint service with the Zimbabwean church who use our building as well. There was food a plenty for those who wanted to stay after the service although as is often the case at this time of year, very few were able to stay, having other lunch commitments.

Christmas Eve fell on Sunday in 2023 and it seemed appropriate therefore to hold a Communion service which Sue Johnson kindly led. Clive Pickett opened our Christmas Day with a lovely morning celebration service.

In January we held a review meeting of our pastoral aspects and now have an up to date list of members and contacts which complies with GDPR. This aligned well with the sad closure of Hall Street church and a number of members have joined us at Moulsham. We pray that they will feel at home here and part of the wider family.

MOULSHAM LODGE

Mark led our Annual Church Meeting in February the essence of which was that there was a more positive feeling at ML and that we all needed to take a break to give a breathing space and rethink future plans. There was discussion on the future of the circuit and the appointment of a new minister to replace Deacon Ramona, with the implication of leaving Mark more time to spend with both ourselves and Broomfield church. It was at this meeting that, after very many years of service as a Steward, Peter Robb stood down. The entire church is extremely grateful for all of the time effort and love that he has expended over many years to support us all.

As we entered the New Year it was good to report that activities are almost at pre-Covid levels and the building is buzzing from clubs and meetings. At the same time Circuit requested that we reconsider our mission statement for five years and beyond. The stewards reviewed this and put a proposal to church council, in summary, that we believed we were recovering from the last few years and are now moving forward. Our strategy compiled and agreed in 2020 stands firm and we can measure all we are doing against it positively. We are confident that this will stand us in good stead for the next few years but as with everything there are unforeseen situations we cannot plan for and must have faith that we do not need to. This was accepted by council and conveyed back to Circuit for inclusion within their plans.

One area that had caused confusion was over the times of our services, dependent on whether we were joining with our other Chelmsford Methodist friends or holding the service on "home turf". The Three churches steering Group decided to offer a single service time for the three churches of 10.30am. This was adopted by all and commenced in June.

A 10.30am start for services gives us all the opportunity to share in fellowship after the service with teas and coffees, a time to catch up with friends and perhaps to make new ones. Any change needs to time to settle down and it will be interesting to look back on the change in June 2025 to see the true impact.

As usual in March we celebrated our church anniversary, this year being 62 years old, with a service of thanksgiving led by Clive Pickett. At the same time we started a Lent Course focused on God's Mercy and Grace taking us through to Easter with the Good Friday walk of Witness and worship in the city centre. This was followed by a time of reflection led by Mark back in church in the afternoon. It was good to see other Circuit members join us for what was a poignant time. Numbers were a little lower on the Good Friday morning and fewer walked down from the estate. Probably this is only to be expected as we

MOULSHAM LODGE

all get older and therefore it may be that the afternoon reflection becomes the preferred alternative.

Mark also led our Sunday worship on Easter Day with a nearly full church. It was lovely to see so many friends delighting in worship on such a special day.

In April we held a further joint service with St Lukes, hosted by themselves, which was very well attended by our congregation. We continue to look at ways we can work together.

Bible Study recommenced post Easter and is studying the Book of Acts.

The range of activities within the building is growing with Baby Basics being very much in demand and the number of Moses baskets supplied now running into three figures. Our Art and Craft Club is popular and is actively involved in decorating aspects of the building for our festivals.

Coffee mornings every Thursday continue to reach out to a number of the community with some new faces seen who are always very welcome.

Brigades continue to meet weekly during term time although sometimes the numbers of young people who come along is well down, a sign of external pressures in many cases. Thanks are due to all the leaders who give so much of their time to keep this long standing initiative going.

The summer period is always a time of quiet and provides a time for reflection and rest for the church before moving into the more hectic Autumn when meetings and activities seem to take off. There are currently ideas floating about the possibility of a before school group operating from the church which we look forward to supporting. 2023 2024 has been a fulfilling year, we look forward to the coming year and all our Lord has planned for us.

Bob Griffin

ST AUGUSTINES

St Augustine's bids farewell to Revd Caroline Brown



Revd Caroline Brown, minister at St. Augustine's, North Springfield, retired last month. Caroline, ordained an Anglican priest, was appointed to the ecumenical project at St Augustine's in 2019, where she has worked closely with all local churches and denominations. Although only part-time, she liaised with the churches in the Anglican Mission and Ministry Partnership, the Roman Catholic community, who share the church

building, the Progressive Christianity Network discussion group and Churches Together in Chelmsford including the Methodist circuit, where she forged firm friendships with Mark and Sheridan Pengelly.

Caroline was an advocate of developing links with the community and promoted the establishment of the Little Free Pantry, Parent and Baby/Toddler Group, church action groups, chat groups and actively supported the local Food Bus.

Caroline decided to take retirement at the same time as her husband, Rev Terry Brown who served at St Andrew's, Sandon. They have bought a house in Maldon where she intends to spend more time on her favourite hobby of 'things artistic', including painting and sculpture.

Her last weekend at St Augustine's was a busy one. A barn dance was held on Saturday, June 8th when friends, old and new, were welcome to join in the fun. All ages came together to eat, drink, try their best to follow the instructions of the caller, as well as wishing Caroline well for the future.



The following day was Caroline's last as the priest at St Augustine's and a special farewell service was held in the afternoon. Caroline was joined

ST AUGUSTINES

by fellow clergy to take the service. Revd Naomi Spriggs, from Springfield Park Baptist church, gave the sermon when she invited all to be prepared to listen and receive a personal message from God. Revd Mark Pengelly and Father Martin Harvey led the prayers. After the service there were refreshments and a presentation of gifts to thank Caroline for all she had done for the church. Among those who gave their vote of thanks was Val Jellows, church warden, Head teacher from the Bishops' School, Greg Waters, leaders from Team Rainbow and Rainbow Tots (children's groups) and from the Indian Orthodox Church (some 60 – 80 families from the immigrant Kerala community which has started using St Augustine's as their church base)



Caroline's presentation cake was decorated with an array of iced figures symbolizing her interests, and since she had so many, it appeared somewhat chaotic and would not have looked out of place at a children's Messy Church session. It was certainly unique!

Caroline thanked everyone for her many and varied gifts.

"It has been such a good time here at St Augustine's and together we deepened our faith in God and have achieved so much for the community, and we are all well set up for whatever is next. We have made good memories together." Revd C.B.

Caroline was a firm believer in the power of prayer and led the groups Prayer Warriors and Pause for Prayer. We pray for her and Terry's good health and fortune in their retirement. At the end of every one of her services, Caroline used the words this Irish blessing:

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

ST AUGUSTINES

The rains fall soft upon your fields and gardens

And until we meet again,

May God hold you in the hollow of His hand.

Jenny Murphy
St Augustine of Canterbury Church

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS

In September we had a joint Harvest Service with all of Barry's Churches. It was held in Maldon and the congregation included folks from Witham, Maldon, Hatfield Peverel and ourselves. We enjoyed a shared lunch afterwards.

In September we also had our usual joint Harvest service with our Anglican friends. Donations - financial and practical - were made to CHES in Chelmsford.

"Open the book" project run by a group of members in the Church is now well established in the town and regularly goes into 2 local schools. This is a wonderful outreach project to the younger members of our community.

Memory worship is led monthly by the Methodist Church community in Windle Court - our local Care Home. Val Carter leads the worship and as an Anna Chaplain is able to support the community in a special way.

Monthly Creative Church with Arts and Crafts activities for local children and their parents continues on the first Saturday of the month in the local Church School hall. The numbers attending monthly are gradually increasing and those who run the group are particularly encouraged by the interaction with the parents and feel it is a wonderful outreach opportunity to spread the word of God. Those attending are repeatedly amazed that the morning is free! No charge for the activities or refreshments!

We had a joint service of Remembrance in November with our Anglican friends led by a Methodist local Preacher.

We had a variety of Christmas services and Advent Courses during the Christmas season.

We had a tree of Joy in Church during the Festive season to collect toys and Gifts for children who would not usually receive a gift at Christmas. It was very well supported and people gave generously.

Our annual Town Carol Service was held in the church as it had been so cold last year by the Bandstand in the town! All denominations from the town took part and some of the local schools. It was lovely to have a full church!

There was a United Covenant Service with Maldon, Witham, Hatfield Peverel and ourselves at the beginning of January followed by a shared lunch.

Continued/....

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS

The stewards and members of the congregation met in March to discuss the circuit mission statement. We felt that our strengths as a church lie in our style/gift/skills for traditional Methodist Values and are considering ways to increase the congregation with that in mind.

World Day of Prayer took place on March 1st in the Evangelical church and was attended by people from all the denominations in South Woodham Ferrers. It was particularly poignant this year as we remembered the women from Palestine. We all enjoyed fellowship and refreshments after the service.

Our Lent ecumenical Bible Study was based on Romans and included zoom sessions across the circuit and face to face sessions in Maldon that some of our congregation attended.

The Anglican Church is currently without a minister and we are working together to share some services. They are invited to our Monthly Communion services on the first Sunday of the Month.

Our witness on Good Friday was an open air worship and drama at the Bandstand in our town square. We felt this was an effective way to witness our Faith in the town.

Our regular activities include:

- Foodbank
- Weekly prayer group
- House group/bible study every fortnight.
- Retiring collections for disaster funds as appropriate.
- Action for Children Collecting boxes

Reflecting on the last year of the work of God in the Church my first thought was that there is increasingly more admin to attend to - as in society in general! There are ongoing safeguarding issues to keep up to date, there has been Equality and Diversity training for some of us to complete, data protection, to name just 3 things from a long list! Things have also been, and continue to be challenging for those of us on our Joint Church Council(we share our building with the Anglican and Catholic Churches). There are many practical things to attend to following the quinquennial inspection and that has meant a lot of work for the fabric committee in particular. There are many risks and responsibilities matters that are being updated. It does all feel overwhelming at times. But then my next thought was that once again we are so lucky in our church because we all play our part in a different way. Whilst all the admin and meetings take up a lot of time for some, others are able to attend prayer meetings, Bible studies, the monthly arts and crafts and Open the Book. There are all the things we take for granted that continue to happen on a regular basis - the notices, the church finances, the music and AV and preparation for services each week. And finally, and in many ways the most important, is the love and care we show and give to each other in times of sadness and joy. We can't all do everything, but with all of us doing something we are hopefully succeeding in doing God's work successfully in the church.

I would like to thank everyone who contributes to the life of the church.

Tricia Tutin

TRINITY

Early in the church year and having sadly said goodbye to her after her three years attached to Trinity, some of us were excited to visit Highlands Methodist Church at Leigh-on-Sea for the splendid welcome service for Heather (now, Rev Heather) Simmons, our former trainee minister. She is now the minister of that church and of the Fishermen's Chapel, whilst continuing as a musician and as a chaplain to musicians. We wish her well and we know she will be a big asset in those situations.

At the same time, we at Trinity, as well as in the circuit, were accustoming ourselves to having only two presbyters in the Circuit, Rev Ramona having returned to Antigua and no replacement for her having been made. This had meant that Rev Mark had found it necessary to minister more widely than usual and we show extra appreciation of all that he does for us and for the Circuit. More, very positive, news of that later.....!

There has been much discussion in Chelmsford, amongst the Methodist churches, about their future roles and ambitions for mission in the city. The holding, once each month, of a combined service for those churches has continued throughout the year, and this has been much appreciated by all. Initially, this was for four churches; the sad closure of the Hall Street church at the end of 2023 has meant we are now a three-church grouping. The services, often carefully themed, have usually been prepared and led by Rev Mark, always very thoughtfully and inspiringly. A small singing group often takes part - we were prompted to do this, initially, by Rev Heather, who had brought her wonderful Waterside Choir over from Leigh to take part on one occasion!

The three-churches initiative has been on a much wider footing than just the combined services, however. Regular meetings have been, and still are, taking place at which representatives from the churches are considering many angles on the way forward. In particular, examples of good practice in other parts of the country have been examined by some of our representatives visiting Methodist communities there. We pray for good decisions being forthcoming, so as to ensure that our future is sustainable and that a Christian witness will continue in our city. To this end, we have recently started to hold prayer walks, each one being around a different location in Chelmsford, when we pray specifically for various localised activities, such as schools, medical practices, community activities and such. Preparations are also well advanced for a three-churches Arts and Crafts weekend in September, culminating in a harvest celebration.

We have had to come to terms, in recent times, with the fact that church organists are far less numerous than in earlier years. We welcome the fact that Gerald makes himself available to play the organ for services whenever he can, and we have been delighted to welcome, in recent weeks, Katie, who plays the piano for us and is always keen to be involved. We are pleased to have our Worship Band leading the singing once each month, Rev Mark being prominent on bass guitar! On other occasions, we sing, accompanied by Christian worship videos from the internet. More of what we do now depends on having a skilled team of IT experts, to prepare and project a variety of resources, and we are always on the lookout to expand this team.

TRINITY

Christmastime at Trinity followed its established pattern, with a Big Sing just before Christmas, and then a Pyjama Service, a midnight Christmas Eve communion service and a Christmas Day family service.

There had again been an enthusiastic and well-received Carol Singing evening in a local pub, splendidly accompanied on the piano by Dave Cooke, the husband of Rev Heather.

Our house groups have continued to play an important part in the life of the church, as has our effective pastoral system. We have now renamed our pastoral visitors as “pastoral links”, recognising that there are many ways of maintaining effective contact, not only by actual visitation.

Our Music and Drama Fellowship continues to thrive and, this year, celebrates an unbelievable sixty years since its inception. Initially created for church members to perform Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, also spiritual and secular plays, in the church hall or the worship area, much has changed over the years. These days, many of our members are from other churches or none, and our productions are on a much more massive scale. Central to this is our week at the Chelmsford Theatre (formerly the Civic Theatre) each May, when we perform a musical. This year, it was a very well-received *My Fair Lady*. (Sadly, G&S no longer brings in big audiences, so we have to look elsewhere.) We look forward to performing a concert version of *Chess*, at our own church, in October. Last October, in our church, we did a concert of music from Oscar-nominated films, again well received. A lovely spin-off each year is that our May show coincides with Christian Aid Week, and so we collect for Christian Aid, in buckets, as patrons leave the theatre. This year, we amassed a splendid £825!

Another very valuable activity that has continued during the year is our TLC group. (The acronym stands for “Trinity Link Club” or “Tender Loving Care”, both of which are appropriate.) Once each fortnight, on Wednesday mornings, elderly people come together for a social morning and a lunch on the premises. Also, once each month, on Sundays, there are Friendship Lunches, followed by an informal service of Holy Communion, for those who wish to participate. Our Men’s Supper Club continues, once per two months, to provide an opportunity for men to come together for a convivial meal, followed by a presentation, on a religion-based or secular topic, by an invited speaker.

An activity which you would not normally associate with Methodism is our Bowls Club. Chancellor Park Methodist Bowls Club came into being at the start of the 2023 outdoor bowling season, being a merger of the old Trinity and Hall Street clubs. We retained the word Methodist and based the new name on the name of our shared bowling green. We are currently in our second season together. We have members from all three of the city Methodist churches, also from other churches and from none. We compete against other local, “normal” clubs, in a Tuesday evening league, also in friendly matches. We have internal tournaments and informal “roll ups”. New members are always welcome.

TRINITY

And now, to the future.....! We look forward, with anticipation, to the arrival of our, currently missing, third Chelmsford Circuit presbyter. Rev Asif Karam, currently in the Newham circuit, will be arriving in September, to join with Rev Mark in a Chelmsford team ministry. He will be largely associated with us at Trinity, with Mark, although being in the circuit for another two years, broadly assigned to other churches. We shall miss his vibrancy at Trinity, although we know he will still be around, but we look forward to giving Asif a warm welcome and to him developing our work and witness, maybe in new ways. We earnestly pray that, whatever the future may hold, our Christian witness in our city may thrive.

JEFF GREEN

WITHAM

WITHAM METHODIST CHURCH

WORK OF GOD MAY 2024

Like other Churches in the Circuit, we are beginning the process of examining where we are as a Church and where we might be in the next five years. This time of reflection and questioning is a real challenge and might seem overwhelming but in looking back over the last year there are real signs of hope and evidence of God working in this place.

We have been delighted to welcome new folk to our services and some of these have gone on to make the commitment to become Church members. Recently four of our congregation made the decision to be baptized, three by total immersion. What a wonderful way to publicly witness to their Christian faith.

We continue to have the privilege of hosting Witham's Foodbank. The numbers of those using the service seem to grow with each month and our thanks go to those who work so hard each week to enable this vital service to happen.

The Coffee Group which meets twice monthly also thrives with coffee, chat and a variety of craft activities. The Church congregation have been the recipients of some of their work, recently being presented with beautiful hand-made cards for Mothering Sunday.

Two other areas of God's working in Witham stand out this year.

We have been immensely blessed by our Bible studies. We have looked at some of the Book of Revelations under the guidance of some of our Circuit preachers. We have examined the letters to the seven churches and watched videos showing the archaeological sites of these Churches. This background information greatly helped our understanding. It was not always easy, in fact some passages were a real challenge but thanks to the guidance of Barry and Ria we have learned a lot, our faith has been deepened and I hope our ability to explain our faith to others has been strengthened.

We are currently looking at the book of Romans and again videos of the area and the commentary of Andrew Ollerton are making this both informative and enjoyable.

The work of the Church with young people continues with our twice monthly Sunday Clubs and the fortnightly Saturday Children's club.

The children and adults play games, hear Bible stories, sing songs and engage in a variety of craft activities all rounded off with some delicious snacks. It is noisy and fun. Numbers fluctuate but on one session we had 17 young people

WITHAM

and we are delighted that children who have no connection to the Church are coming along. Thanks must go to Rev. 'Femi for her vision and endless energy. At a time when we face many challenges and we might feel despondent it is good to see God at work in this place.