

Hall Street Methodist Church 1863 to 2023

*160 years of service to
the local community*



The **Methodist** Church 



Change - The Never-Changing Constant

The Methodist movement was inspired by John Wesley's longing for change and renewal in Christian faith. Methodism was not originally envisaged to be another way of being the Church, but rather hoped to be a renewal movement within the Church of England.

Wesley was an Anglican parson following in the footsteps of his father, but what he experienced of the Church inspired him to do things differently. 'Methodist' was a sneering nickname given to Wesley and his friends who's methodical approach to serious and devout Christian faith was considered by the establishment as extreme and overly

'enthusiastic'. During the period of Wesley's life (1703-1791) an approach to Christian faith developed that inspired millions over the next two centuries and to this day.

The Wesleyan Methodists themselves soon had to face change though. Within just a few years of Wesley's death, some were so disgruntled at the way the Methodist movement had stagnated and lost its evangelical fervour, that they broke away and formed new movements - the Methodist New Connection in 1805, the Primitive Methodists in 1812 and the Bible Christian's in 1814 (my family in North Devon has strong roots in the latter).

For over a hundred years these three branches of Methodism (and several other smaller ones as well), flourished and grew, not only in Britain, but throughout the globe. During the Victorian period many areas had three or even four separate Methodist Circuit's (local groups) belonging to these different branches of Methodism. Even recently, some at Hall Street, (Peter Batey springs to mind!), were very conscious of the fact that the origins of Hall Street were in the radical revivalist 'Primitive' part of Methodism. When Hall Street was opened in 1863 it would have been part of a Circuit consisting only of other Primitive Methodist churches. (see the article later in the booklet for more detail on Primitive Methodism).

The next significant change for Methodists was in the first part of the twentieth century. Following a joining together of some of the smaller branches of the Methodist family in 1907, a process which involved many years of negotiation and discussion led to the creation of The Methodist Church of Great Britain in 1932. The process of bringing these different Methodist strands together has been a work in progress ever since, once again it meant significant change.

Leap forward to the twenty-first century and once again Methodism is facing change. The Methodist mission and work at Hall Street coming to a conclusion is the result of many different factors, not least a big change in our society and its desire for organised religion.

Some of these changes have been reflected in the way new Churches have emerged; Hall Street has been pleased to host Chelmsford Presbyterian Church for example. However, the members of Hall Street, like many other places, have come to the conclusion that our Methodist mission in this place is now complete. When things that have been loved and cherished cease it's always a cause of sadness and there's that sense of deep loss. I ask for your prayers for those who found Hall Street to be a nurturing and sustaining place for their faith.

I finish with a reminder of the fact that the faith based in Jesus Christ is founded on an apparent death. When all seemed hopeless, new life was found. May that faith encourage us all as we face the next chapter of change.

Charles Wesley, brother of John and famous hymn writer said:

*Through all the changing scenes of life,
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ.*

John Wesley's dying words were these: **'the best of all is, God is with us'**.
This remains true.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark" with a stylized flourish underneath.

Rev'd Mark F Pengelly
Methodist Minister for Hall Street and
Superintendent of the Chelmsford Methodist Circuit

CHELMSFORD HALL STREET PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL

Hall Street, Chelmsford
Essex CM2 0HG

*Part of the Chelmsford Methodist Circuit
1932 till December 2023*

Opened in 1863 this chapel could seat 175 people. It also contained one school hall and one other room. By 1993, the chapel only had a small congregation of 12 members and Sunday services continued every week at 9.30am until 31st December 2023 when the society will cease. The strong and committed congregation has changed over the years but has stayed constant with 12 members with several new members coming on board in 2023. The Church is part of the Methodist Circuit of thirteen churches in Essex.

Foundation-stone laying

From the Primitive Methodist magazine of November 1863:

“Chelmsford.—The foundation-stone of a new chapel was laid August 24th, when a large congregation was gathered together. The Rev. M Lupton, of London, conducted the preliminary devotions ; after which J. A. Hardcastle, Esq., M.P., came forward and a silver trowel was presented to him and he then laid the stone. He afterwards gave an address to the people. He also handed over a cheque, and has promised to give us another.

After his address the Rev. G. Lamb, of London, gave an excellent address, which gave great satisfaction. A hymn was then sung and the friends retired to the Wesleyan chapel, where tea was provided. After tea we held a public meeting, which was addressed by the Revs. G. Lamb, M. Lupton, S. Rowe (Wesleyan superintendent), and G. Wilkinson, (Independent). We had in the chair Mr. Samuel Turner, of Chelmsford, a tried friend. The chapel will be 28 feet by 38 inside. J. Dawson.”

PRIMITIVE METHODISM

The Primitive Methodists were a major off shoot of the principal stream of Methodism - the Wesleyan Methodists - in 19th Century Britain.

In the early decades of the 19th century there was a growing body of opinion among the Wesleyans that their Connexion was moving in directions which were a distortion of, not to say a betrayal of, what John Wesley had brought to birth in the 18th century.

Eventually a Methodist preacher called Hugh Bourne became the catalyst for a breakaway, to form the Primitive Methodists. Probably 'primitive' was used to clarify their self-understanding that they were the true guardians of the original, or primitive, form of Methodism.

The sorts of issues which divided the Primitives and the Wesleyans were these:

- The Primitives focused attention on the role of lay people. The Wesleyans developed a high doctrine of the Pastoral Office to justify leadership being in the hands of the ministers.
- The Primitives stressed simplicity in their chapels and their worship. The Wesleyans were open to cultural enrichment from the Anglican tradition and more ornate buildings.
- The Primitives concentrated their mission on the rural poor. The Wesleyans on the more affluent and influential urban classes.
- The Primitives stressed the political implications of their Christian discipleship. The Wesleyans were nervous of direct political engagement.

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By the end of the 19th century these two streams of Methodism realised they had more in common than they might have supposed. So conversations began which led to their being the two principal partners in the union to form the present-day Methodist Church in 1932.



Recently discovered crockery found at Hall Street with a logo.

HALL STREET METHODIST CHURCH

125TH ANNIVERSARY 1864—1989

(We are deeply indebted to Mr L W Kinsey for the careful and extensive research which provided this survey)

In the early 1850's, a young man named Cooper together with another, by trade a scissors grinder, became discontented with the condition of Chelmsford's church life and, becoming under the spell of Primitive Methodism, went into the surrounding villages to preach with such success that the London Primitive Methodist Missionary Committee, in the Spring of 1854, sent a missionary R Monkman to the town. Preaching his first sermon in the open air from Stone Bridge, Chelmsford, he soon met with a measure of success and the first class meetings were held in a room placed at his disposal in Union Yard (41 members being reported to the 1855 Conference). But more publicity was needed and so, the permission of the Landlord, Mr Joseph Alfred Hardcastle, a Writtle brewer and sometime MP for Colchester, and the tenant Mr Stock, an old paint shop in Springfield Road, part of the site of the former Empire Theatre, was put into a presentable condition and, with the insertion of a pulpit and forms, became the second home of the small society.

However, these premises were not entirely satisfactory and steps were taken to secure a more suitable site.

On August 9th 1858, John Copeland, a solicitor in London Road, Chelmsford, had leased a plot of land for a thousand years to a Mr Thomas Moss a brickmaker of St John's Road Chelmsford, in a road made by the said John Copeland running in between Moulsham Street and Mildmay Road and now as Hall Street for the purpose of erecting houses. These two gentlemen proved to be great friends to Methodism in the subsequent negotiations and building of the Chapel. At present the earliest known reference to Hall Street is a note appearing in the printed plan for the first quarter of 1863 which states 'On February 15th 1863, three sermons will be preached at Chelmsford by Master D Sheen, the popular youthful preacher from London, when collections will be made towards the erection of a new chapel in Chelmsford'.



The first trustees' meeting was held on May 21st 1863 when Rev J Dawson Snr; Messrs T Moss, Snr: J Campin; J Peck Snr and S Turner decided 'owing to the inconvenience of the present place of worship, it is desirable to erect a new chapel in Hall Street, Moulsham and that, since a sum of money nearly equal to £100 towards the erection has already been promised, we request Mr T Moss to prepare plans and specifications and the probable cost of a new building of the following dimensions: 38ft x 28ft between the walls. The plans were produced and, whilst tenders were being invited, on 24th June 1863, Mr T Moss agreed to surrender back to Mr Copeland a portion of the land he had leased in order that, with Mr Moss' consent, it could be sold to the trustees of the Primitive Methodist New Chapel, Chelmsford.

By 6th August 1863, gifts and promises totalled £125 and Mr Moss junior's tender of £230 for the erection of the chapel was accepted. The foundation stone was laid on August 24th 1863 by Mr Hardcastle; the Rev G Lamb being the preacher at two meetings held, one of them in the former Wesleyan Chapel in Springfield Road, and the sum of £103s 10d was contributed. (The trowel of ivory and silver used at the tone-laying ceremony was found many years later in a second hand book shop in Epsom, Surrey, purchased and sent by a friend to Mr G Wiffen who kindly presented it to the trustees).

On 20th October 1863 for the sum of £52 10s 0d. John Copeland Esq of Chelmsford sold to Thomas Moss the elder of Chelmsford, Gentleman: Samuel Turned of Chelmsford, backer maker; James Campin of Little Waltham, farmer: James Ripper of Great Waltham, farmer, and Joseph Peck Chelmsford, carpenter, "all that piece of freehold ground land tax redeemed situate in the hamlet of Moulsham in Chelmsford on the south side of a certain street called Hall Street (frontage 42ft and a uniform depth of 52ft).

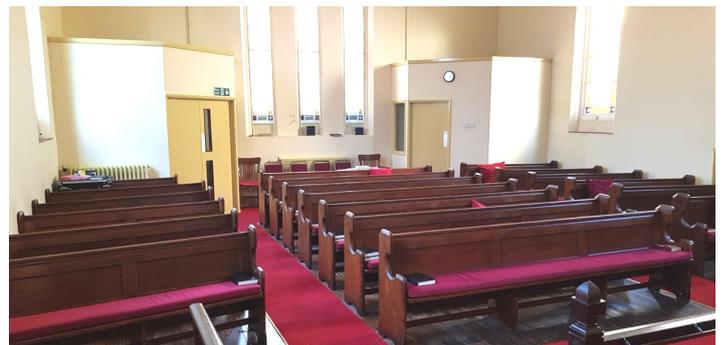
In the November 1863 18 benches for the sides of the chapel were purchased and it was subsequently decided to charge 1/3d per quarter for side seats whereas middle seats were only charged 1/-.

It was necessary however for the trustees on January 6th 1864 to obtain a loan of £20 from a Mr George Choat and the final instalment of principal and interest was not repaid until December 13th 1890.

The minister of the church at this time was Rev Jacob Dawson and, according to the Primitive Methodist Magazine 1864 volume at the opening on February 18th 1864, "two very interesting and impressive sermons were preached by the Rev E Bishop of Bedford: in the morning at 11am and in the afternoon at 2.30pm. At 5 o'clock a public tea was gratuitously provided by friend and at 7pm a public meeting was held: Mr T Moss was in the chair, details of the financial aspect were given and the meeting was addressed by the Revs. S J Southwood, C Rigg, V Hook and J Cornwall . The cost of the chapel was £419 11s 0d and the opening services were continued on February 21st and 28th 1864.

The Certificate of Worship, number 16174 dated April 9th 1864, was registered on 2nd May 1864 but it was not until December 3rd 1898 that a certification of the Solemnisation of Marriages was obtained.

The trustees decided on September 2nd 1864, that a "proper book of accounts be kept and that Mr Turned be respectfully requested to get the entrance lobbies completed...that the congregation may not be inured by the cold winds. Also, that



north side windows be distempered or obscured: coco-matting be obtained for the two aisles and carpeting for the stairs and pulpit. The trust was renewed on September 3rd 1894 and subsequently on September 8th 1911: December 17th 1937 and March 12th 1950: The Model Deed being adopted on November 5th 1937.

In the 1890's it was apparent that the work at Hall Street was being hindered by the inadequacy of the premises and, in consequence, on April 28th 1896, by indenture, Charles Pertwee conveyed to the trustees for £30, for the purpose of building schoolroom, a piece of land having a frontage of 20ft to Roman Road and a depth of 41ft 6in and abutting on the rear of the chapel. On June 26th 1899, the trustees passed the specification for the building and the tender Lummis and Son, for the erection which cost £338 16s 5d, was accepted.

Foundation stones were laid on November 15th 1899 by A G Maskell, the then Mayor of Chelmsford, Miss Marriage of Aylets, Broomfield: Miss Pritchard and one on behalf of the Sunday School by Rev Dowson, E Baker (the superintendent) and H Clark (Circuit Steward). Following a Bazaar in January 1900, the opening services for the schoolroom were held on March 11th 1900 and by February 4th 1902, the total capital cost £494 8s 7d had been raised. An American organ for the schoolroom had been purchased in 1899 for £20.

In 1905 a redecoration and restoration scheme costing £203 16s 3d, was undertaken which included internal and external painting, re-seating in the church, and the removal and replacement of the old pulpit by one made originally for the schoolroom. Other major schemes were undertaken in 1932, 1952-53 and 1963 and a new heating system has now been installed.

Hall Street has always sought to make provision for the growing population of Chelmsford and its surroundings. It contributed generously in 1910 to the building of the former Broomfield Methodist Chapel and efforts were made without avail to purchase Street Farmhouse on the corner of Grove Road and Moulsham Street.

As early as 1883 it is recorded "we have missioned Rainsford Road End which is likely to prove a successful mission and in November 1912 and January 1913, for the sum of £347 10s 9d, plots of land on the Coval Hall Estate were purchased and on which on February 17th 1915, the former Rainsford Road Chapel open to be subsequently replaced by the current Trinity Methodist Church.

During the 1919-20 land was also purchased from Mr H Godfrey in Grove Road, Chelmsford for the erection of a new church but difficulties arose and the land was sold in 1922 to the Peculiar People.

At the Quarterly meeting held on March 5th 1866, it was reported by Hall Street that 'we have commenced a school (Sunday) of six scholars but this had ceased by 1879. In the year ended March 12th 1884, the school had just re-commenced with five teachers and 18 Scholars but, owing to no teachers in February 1885 it had to close again. However, before 1900 it had once again re-opened and the work had been continuous since then.



Hall Street 2022

Throughout the years various youth activities have been held including Junior Christian Endeavour, 1912-19 and 1922-27 Scouts, Guides and Brownies.

In its early days, Hall Street had a weekly prayer meeting and from at least 1899, a senior Christian Endeavour and, in 1921, these two organisations amalgamated to form the Guild, which was still meeting in 1989.

It would seem that the Woman's Own was started in 1908 by Mrs Clulow and, throughout the years, this meeting has proved a valuable asset to the society.

One of the features of Hall Street has been its singing especially to Good Friday Sacred Service and the existence of a choir has been traced back to at least 1885. In early days a harmonium used to lead the singing and the present organ is understood to have come originally from New Hall, Boreham and has undergone considerable repair and improvements, especially in 1933, 1946 and 1957. An electric organ blower was installed in 1941 and it is interesting to read a trust minute of July 1911 which states 'that the secretary see the blower in reference to recent complaints of sleeping during service and blowing.'

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF HALL STREET METHODIST CHURCH

Reflection on an Act of Worship 16.2.2014

This is a reflection about the afternoon service which took place at the 150th Anniversary of Hall street Methodist church. The worshippers comprised about 60 people, 90% over 55, 55% female, 80% previous members or visitors from the local area, 85% of British descent.

The local Minister Rev'd Viv Gasteen explained how in the morning service the congregation heard what their forbears would have faced when opening the church 150 years ago. This second time of worship would be of celebration, thanksgiving and anticipation.

It was obvious many people present belonged to the silent generation; at an early point, the preacher tried hard to lift the mood of the people into a lighter happier more celebratory even responsive frame of mind. The congregation singing was enthusiastic and showed a good response to some celebratory unaccompanied singing of Hallelujah led by the preacher. The chosen hymns achieved a good balance in styles and material. It was thought that the prayers contributed greatly to the worship by providing the essential ingredients but also the tone and the phrases used were very soothing and presented in a calm way.

The aim of the service, to show how we are all individually known and loved by God came out well in the sermon and the text from Isaiah 43: 4. The Gospel reading from St. John, "I am the Vine and you are the branches", didn't seemed to feature so much, but largely the sermon was well placed for the congregation. An effort was made to include material steward Peter Batey had provided from 50 years ago.

Continued/....

The theme of anticipation and looking to the future was handled well, as were the forthcoming challenges that will become apparent to the community normally represented at this church. It seemed that perhaps the only omissions were some mention of the second Christian organisation that used these premises and the healing services that take place there.

When taken as a whole the sermon was well presented, with obvious eye contact and some personal testimony. Good use was made of dramatic pauses and taken with changes in voice modulation this kept the listener's interest. Giving the conclusion with a funny animal story is not text book preaching but it could be viewed as suitable for the occasion.

The congregation were dismissed having felt a part of a celebration, reminded that they were individually known and loved by God and where appropriate thanked for their efforts. Also, people would feel in anticipation of what the future here as Christian disciples will bring, remembering the importance of our mission to help those in our city centre setting and looking forward to being a part of what God can do in this place. At the end, the preacher made a point of individually greeting everyone who attended by walking round the pews. This was a practical application of the message from Isaiah and was a definite way of including every individual. The overriding impression one would take from the service was one of being uplifted and brought into a frame of mind to accept the new challenges of being a Christian disciple.

Written by John Clemo

Chelmsford Circuit Local Preacher



The organ was dismantled in January 2023 to reveal a second door that leads into the school classroom & kitchen (below) . The church hosted a service with four other Methodist Churches in Chelmsford, led by Sheridan Pengelly for Climate Sunday.



LAST OFFICIAL COUNCIL MEETING AT HALL STREET OCTOBER 2023



Nigel Murrell—John Huscroft—Mike Shelbourne—Jerry Kavanagh—
Diane Clemence

Olive Young—Rev'd Mark Pengelly—Jean Hunt—Joan Potter

Additional Members unable to attend this meeting.

Kobby Ofosuhene—Thomas Twum—Valerie Shelbourne—
Ray Long—Katie Marsh

CLOSURE & REFLECTIONS.

It certainly hasn't been an easy year in Hall Street Methodist Church. One of the oldest Methodist Churches in the circuit it has really stood the test of time over the years facing so many difficulties and problems. At the beginning of 2023 we had the loss of the very dear Peter Batey a man that not only kept Hall Street ticking along but so many other things as well and at his farewell service so many came to pay their respects. A very special time.

We are very grateful for many things but especially the time and effort from senior steward Jerry Kavanagh. Wonderful blessed pianist Katie Marsh as well as support from Mark Pengelly, our minister, preachers and others for their kindness. We are a very blessed and together congregation, very much helped and supported by Nigel and Karen Murrell.

Now we must see with God's leading and guiding what the future brings. We say as a body of His people "Thy Will Be Done." So be it.

Mike & Valerie Shelbourne

Local Preacher

END OF AN ERA

Dear friends we have finally arrived at the closure of Hall Street Methodist Church. Such a pleasure to have shared time and the opportunity to get to know you all. My life has become richer for bring a part of Hall Street. I shall not forget you and praise God for you, may he continually watch over you and bless you all.

Whatever comes after Hall Street, our journey will continue as we continue with our life in Christ. The new chapter of our life begins. I look forward to our final destination where we will not part but be in the wonderful glorious kingdom of Heaven with our Lord. Shalom brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

Jerry Kavanagh

Senior Steward.

Chelmsford Methodist Circuit

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The **Methodist** Church 

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