

WORK OF GOD

CHELMSFORD

METHODIST CIRCUIT

SEPTEMBER 2022



CHRIST CHURCH, BRAINTREE

Our **weekly groups** have continued throughout the year. Foodbank now operates twice a week in the church and other support groups have continued. This means that Christ Church is open many times throughout each week and we remain so thankful for the various ways that many people use their time and talents to serve God in and through this Church.

In the Spring we ran an **Alpha Course** together with the Church in Great Notley. We were slightly apprehensive as some people were joining us in person whilst others, especially single parents, joined us online. Thankfully the technology really worked very well, and we saw the Holy Spirit at work in most who attended, which was really encouraging.

On **Easter Sunday** we baptised three members of the same family which was a lovely occasion and has led to a few more people looking to explore what baptism means for them. We are also running a **Membership Discovery Course** for those who are interested in joining as a member of Christ Church in the coming months.

A **Ladies Breakfast** was organised in May when we were joined by Lisa Potts who travelled from Wolverhampton. Lisa spoke about how she was attacked with a machete whilst protecting children at a Nursery where she worked in the Midlands around the same time as the Dunblane attack took place. Lisa spoke of how she recovered from the horrific injuries she sustained and then coped with PTSD in the years afterwards. She also spoke about her Christian faith and the part that it played in her recovery. This event was well supported by the ladies who seemed to enjoy the fact that the men of the church turned up to help serve the breakfast!

In June the Queen's **Platinum Jubilee** became a focus for mission at Christ Church. We delivered 800 'Packs of Hope' to homes around the church inviting people to a Community Cream Tea which was really well attended. So many people came that we needed to set out more seating to accommodate everyone. We then invited the community to watch the concert from London on our large screens at the church which was not as well attended but we considered still well worth the effort.

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A **Comedy and Curry night** was held as a community event in mid-June. Christian Comedian Tom Elliot joined us for what was a very entertaining evening of laughter and good food. This evening was well supported by both the community and people from Christ Church.

We also ran CWR's **Paraclesis Course** over six sessions during which we looked at pastoral care and the way that we support and encourage one another in the Christ Church community. We considered how we are called to journey together and use our own experiences to support others who may be going through similar situations that we have been through.

Our Young People attended the Summer Camp called '**Dreaming the Impossible**' in Staffordshire. We are grateful to the team of leaders who gave up their own holiday time to take the young people to this event. They joined thousands of other teenagers in worship, going deeper in their faith and lots of fun. We are pleased to say that everyone came back enthused!

We have run our first **Family Holiday Club** called 'Time Travellers'. This was somewhat different to our usual Holiday Club, with adults attending as well as their children. However, we are trying to form better links with the families in Braintree and especially with the many families who attend various activities at the church during the week.

Recognising that during the Pandemic many of us have struggled with our mental health, we have started our first **Kintsugi Hope Course** with folk from the church. We have explored topics such as anxiety, depression, shame, perfectionism, disappointment and loss. This course will continue after the summer break, and it is our hope to make this available to the community of Braintree in coming months.

Finally, we had a Gift Day to try to raise funds which we intend to use to employ a **part-time youth worker, and a part-time family link worker**. Whilst our funding will only allow a few hours a week, we believe that these positions will enable extra hours to be given to two areas which we have identified as key to ensuring growth and mission at Christ Church as we go forward.

David Sebley

HALL STREET

Certainly hasn't been easy or straightforward as we seek to get back to a bit of normality. Some Sundays the attendance can be fairly small however we have other very good weeks when we have quite a few gather and the atmosphere and fellowship continue to be very good. We are delighted that our pianist Katie Marsh is back with us providing uplifting backing to our worship and we also have the great help of tea & coffee after the service. Some of our regular congregation have been unable to return because of age or ill health. However we still enjoy gathering together and look forward to it. We have some new members of the congregation for which we give thanks.

We carry on looking to the Lord to lift us and bless us. We send our love to all the churches and congregations and pray for God's continued blessing upon you.

Mike Shelbourne.

HALSTEAD

Looking back over the last 2+ years, it almost seems as though many of the happenings were like a bad dream – and we are awake now to church life which has hardly changed. We do have a few new faces in our Sunday congregation, but on the whole the numbers at Sunday worship are much the same as in B.C. – Before Covid.

After some weeks of debate, we are back to thinking once again about raising much-needed funds. Very recently, we bravely took a pitch at Halstead's community event in the park (stalls, music, dog show, bagpiper.....) and had a good day - yes, we raised some funds, but more importantly we were seen to be part of the community, made new friends, and had some excellent conversations around the stall.

We are aware that it is a long distance for preachers to drive to Halstead, and several of our worshippers are keen to take more part in leading aspects of our worship, which is very encouraging. So, as the hymn says, "We will praise Him for all that is past, and trust Him for all that's to come".

Rev Sue King

HATFIELD PEVEREL REALITY CHURCH

It hardly seems possible that we are approaching our 4th Birthday (in October) Still very young but keen to pass on God's message of love for all. which is endorsed at Jeff's continuing weekly bible study group.

Our average attendance at Sunday worship has increased and new contacts are continually being made through our "out reach" activities, such as Jane's Stitch to Enrich group and Barry's weekly Lunch club at St. Andrew's school.

We are also now reaching many more outside of Hatfield Peverel (thanks to our many skilled IT members) via our new Facebook page, which is constantly updated with details and photos of our services and activities and includes a daily "thought for the day"

However we have had to sadly say goodbye recently to Sandy, who can no longer be our School and Family Worker, due to moving house. She has been an inspiration to all of us for the past three years, because of her amazing enthusiasm, energy and dedication with which she carried out her work. She will be greatly missed especially by the children at St. Andrew's School lunch club who eagerly responded to the fun of her sessions and her words of encouragement, while teaching them true Christian values in a light hearted manner. We wish her all God's blessings in her new home and career.

We recently invited 2 Ukrainian families,(who have been given accommodation in our village), to come to Reality Church and are pleased they happily accepted. We have made our services more flexible in order to manage the language barriers, to involve them as much as possible and to give them a warm welcoming environment. They are settling in well and enjoy attending worship every Sunday and our outside activities. They are much quicker at learning English than we are at learning Ukrainian – **we** must try harder!

The recent sunny weather has been a blessing for our latest venture which has been to run a Summer Kids Club every Tuesday morning during the school holidays. Hosted very kindly and generously by John and Jenny Clemo in their spacious garden. There have been no shortage of willing adult helpers who have also join in the Bible story activities as enthusiastically as the children.

Language is no barrier to making bread and colouring paper fishes or building the highest cardboard box towers on rocks or sand !

See our Facebook page for the happy photos [Hatfield Peverel Reality Church-Methodist](#)

Aileen French

MALDON METHODIST CHURCH

So, what has happened over the last year in Maldon Methodist.

Let's begin by saying in the words of Charles Dickens *"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."*

If Jesus said that he would off reversed it by putting the negative first followed by the positive. And you could say we in Maldon have done that.

We have made worship, renewal and reconciliation a priority through out the year. We started our Mums and Tots group, Wesley guild and Keyring (More elderly worship and fellowship) as if it was the best of times. And they have all been well attended.

We run "Alpha" with a small group, which was about reconnecting with Jesus and each other. From Alpha we re-established our Bible study/fellowship and we have been on a journey with Moses and the Hebrew people out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, relating this to what Jesus has done for us.

We also have a small weekly prayer group going, with some twenty-year-olds and beyond looking and praying at how do we reach the twenty something year olds. Watch this space some good ideas are forming.

Let's close by saying at Maldon it is now a "season of light and a season of hope"

Rev. Barry Allen

MOULSHAM LODGE

Late 2021 was a time when, despite reoccurrences of Covid infections, we started to emerge from the pandemic and church life began to regain some of its normality. Members began to have the confidence to return and numbers have continued to rise for Sunday worship, although some of the group activities have now ceased to meet through lack of demand and/or volunteers to organise them.

Whilst we were unable to hold our outdoor Carol Service, we did manage to hold a well attended indoor service and the ability to sing again was greatly welcomed. Christmas Morning worship was seen as marking a turning point in our ability to worship more regularly.

Deacon Ramona led a number of us in an Awayday on prayer up at Danbury St Johns in March.

March saw the coming of Lent and we ran a lent course which was well received by those attending and has run into the regular bi weekly bible class. March also was our 60th Church Anniversary with the first combined Brigade Parade service since 2019. As we used this as an opportunity to look forward, we initiated the Prayer to Pentecost concept. The idea being that for each week leading up to Pentecost there would be one aspect of church life we could commit to our Lord and listen for guidance for how we might move ahead, suggestions being placed in a box at the back of church. Pentecost is now past and we will be evaluating the responses to prayer, and of course continuing to pray for the future of MLMC.

In May we held an outdoor Songs of Praise and were joined by some folk from the Anglican Church of St Lukes. This has prompted a joint service in August and looking at the potential of future shared services.

Finances are tight and we believe it is in answer to prayer that the local Zimbabwean church is now using our building for worship bringing an additional vibrancy to the building and also some much needed income.

It has been a joy to have a wedding at church this year led by Revd Mark and to be able to share the good news of Jesus with so many wedding guests.

We continue to strive towards our ECO church goals making everyone aware of the need to adopt more Eco friendly ways. We are also continuing to use our Eco prayers at many of the worship services. Moulsham Lodge is now also registered as a Fair Trade Church with regular Fair Trade stalls, which are always popular.

There are many problems surrounding our church at the moment in terms of resources but we give thanks that we are recovering and looking to the future. There are plans for us and we are actively trying to discern what they are and to be ready to act as and when we are called to do so.

Bob Griffin

Senior Steward.

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS

How lovely it is to reflect back on a year with no Church closures for Covid! And so we have been able to enjoy our usual Church activities together with some new endeavours to reflect God's work in South Woodham Ferrers.

In September our usual joint Harvest service took place with our Anglican friends. donations - financial and practical - were made to CHESS in Chelmsford.

"Open the book" project started again in September in September and now regularly goes into 2 schools in the town. 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.

A Healing and Hope for all Service was held in our Church in November, led by Ramona. It was a lovely service but unfortunately very poorly attended.

An enjoyable Ecumenical Advent group took place via zoom during December.

It was lovely to celebrate Christmas as a Church family again although there were fewer services and activities than usual as we were still being cautious about Covid.

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.

We had a wonderful Town Carol Service in our Cars in Sainsbury's car park! All denominations from the town took part. We had a brass band leading the singing and goody bags for each car.

We had a change from our usual walk of witness on Good Friday and instead led open air worship and drama at the Bandstand in our town square. We felt this was a different way to witness our Faith in the town and we offered free tea and coffee and Hot Cross buns to all passers by.

We started an Arts and Craft service on Easter Saturday for children and their parents. We are now holding this monthly. The sessions are well received by the children and their parents.

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We enjoyed a coffee morning in May to raise money for Children with disabilities.

There was a successful World Day of Prayer event in May. All the Churches in Woodham got together outside for a celebration of World Day of Prayer.

The Methodist Church had an hourly slot at a stall run by the combined churches in South Woodham Ferrers at an event celebrating the Queen's jubilee. We had fun events in our hour dramatising the story of Moses in the Bulrushes including participating in making Moses baskets. The other event was a robot making a prayer sandwich and needing instructions on how to do it. Parents and children gave instructions that made the robot malfunction! Both events were a lot of fun and parents and children participated with much enthusiasm. There was a lot of interaction between the parents and members of the Methodist Church.

We have registered as an Eco Church and are working towards obtaining an Eco Church award. We have a weekly recommendation in the notices to help reduce carbon footprint.

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

Tricia Tutin

ST AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY

This year has been busy and we have done our best when Covid has caused some plans to alter at the last minute. The 'Little Free Pantry', began operating at the end of December '21 and is well used. The Little Free Pantry was officially opened on Mothering Sunday by the Mayor.

It was a pleasure to be able to have Christmas services, as the previous year they were all on Zoom. We have continued offering Cream Teas on the occasional Sunday afternoon. This has been a way to meet people who wouldn't normally come to church, and also have a social afternoon, with delicious scones, cream and jam.

Last year we signed up to becoming an Eco Church and are continuing our vision to achieve our Bronze award this year. We had a Climate Change Family service and arranged many outdoor activities challenging worshipers to consider recycling and reducing their carbon footprint. Once a month we have a Family Service, and the other weeks we have Sunday School, which we now call - 'Team Rainbow', a name chosen by the children.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee was celebrated with our Catholic friends in the form of a shared meal, singing, quizzes and games.

'Pause for Prayer', used to be every Tuesday evening but now, on these lovely Summer evenings, we have changed to having a prayerful walk, or garden meditation. We share bible verses, music and enjoy God's creation.

'Craft & Chat' was begun at the beginning of the year, and has continued once a month on a Monday. This has been another chance to meet local people who would not normally come to church, but appreciate the friendship and a place to chat. Some members have joined in other church events, now they have got to know us!

The Litter Picking group, 'The Springfield Wombles', continues to meet every Wednesday to try to make a difference. We are a small group who appreciate the friendship and march around Springfield for an hour before Tea! Anyone would be welcome to join us!

A very successful 'Messy Church' took place for children and their families during the Easter Holidays. We are excited that an ecumenical confirmation service has been planned for the Autumn and we are looking in to investing time with the 'Anna Chaplaincy'.

Best wishes to you all from everyone at St Augustine's Ecumenical Church, Springfield.

Pamela Scammell

TRINITY METHODIST

Our Methodist year got off to a good start with a picnic in Admirals Park which was attended by between 50-60 friends from the Chelmsford churches.

On 26th September we held our Harvest/Eco service, and donations were made to Chelmsford foodbank. Mark led a service of Hope & Healing on 7th November which was much appreciated after the challenges of the previous 18 months. Our Church Anniversary in late November, was led by Rev. Julia Lacey, Assistant Curate at the Church of the Ascension & All Saints.

When the new strain of Covid struck, our Covid team decided it wise to cancel the planned special Christmas Services which included Big Sing (19th December) and family Pyjama Service (24th December). However, we did continue with our usual Sunday services with safety restrictions in place.

As Covid numbers fell in January, we felt able to resume Sunday Club for our children & young people. February saw further easing of restrictions and once more we began serving refreshments after the service. Coffee & Fellowship (bi monthly on Friday mornings), and Tea@Two (monthly on Thursday afternoon) soon followed and we were beginning to feel we were on our way back to normality.

Since the beginning of the year we have held very lively All Age Worship on the second Sunday in the month, with our band comprising Kate & Paul Dale, Heather Simmons, and Mark & Sheridan.

Our Covenant Service in January saw the largest congregation since before the first lockdown, and we were delighted to welcome two couples who were to be married at Trinity during the coming year. One of these weddings took place on Easter Monday, and the second will be on 11th August.

With Covid numbers continuing to fall, all our groups started meeting again, including Care Group (bi monthly on Wednesdays), and Singles Lunches (monthly after the service on Sunday) A short Communion service follows Singles Lunches which has in mind those who find it difficult to get to the 9.30 service.

Pastoral Visitors have kept in touch with their groups by phone, email and text during lockdown. More recently, it has been possible to meet in person for those who prefer face to face contact.

Some of our Housegroups met via Zoom during lockdowns but this did not work for all, I am pleased to say all groups are up and running in person once again.

User groups are beginning to come back to Trinity but it is too early to know whether we shall ever see previous numbers.

Our congregation numbers have gradually risen but sadly after two years, some of our members are now physically unable to return. It is good to know that we have You Tube services which are very much appreciated

While Mark is on Sabbatical, we are blessed with visiting preachers, some who are new to us or have not visited for some time. We are doing our best to make them feel welcome and ensuring their services run smoothly

Carol Kellingray

WITHAM METHODIST CHURCH

In Witham we were glad when the Covid restrictions ended so that we are able to worship without wearing masks, and enjoy a chat and refreshments after the Sunday service. We have had several new people join the congregation, which is encouraging, but we have also lost long standing members of our church, due to relocation or illness.

We were also pleased to be able to restart our fortnightly Sunday Club for the children; we are blessed to have young families in the church.

In November we held a very uplifting Circuit Healing and Hope for All service, led by Revd 'Femi Cole-Njie.

At the end of April Mike Fogg recorded a service from Witham for the Circuit You Tube channel, which was interesting.

On June 19th we had a special service and bring and share lunch to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the opening of our new building in Witham in 1962. We had a display of photos of the opening ceremony and other church events, and two narrative accounts about the people and activities of the church during the 1960s, together with a visit from the son of one of the church stewards of the time.

Our Bible Study group now meets monthly, led by Revd Barry & Ria Allen. We have been studying the Book of Exodus.

Our Coffee Pot coffee and crafts group now meets fortnightly and we continue to host the Food Bank each Friday morning.

Sadly, many of the community groups that were using our premises have either relocated or ceased to meet, and this will present us with a financial challenge.

We are looking forward to sharing our Harvest Festival service and lunch in September with our friends from Maldon, Hatfield Peverel and South Woodham Ferrers.

Janis Croom