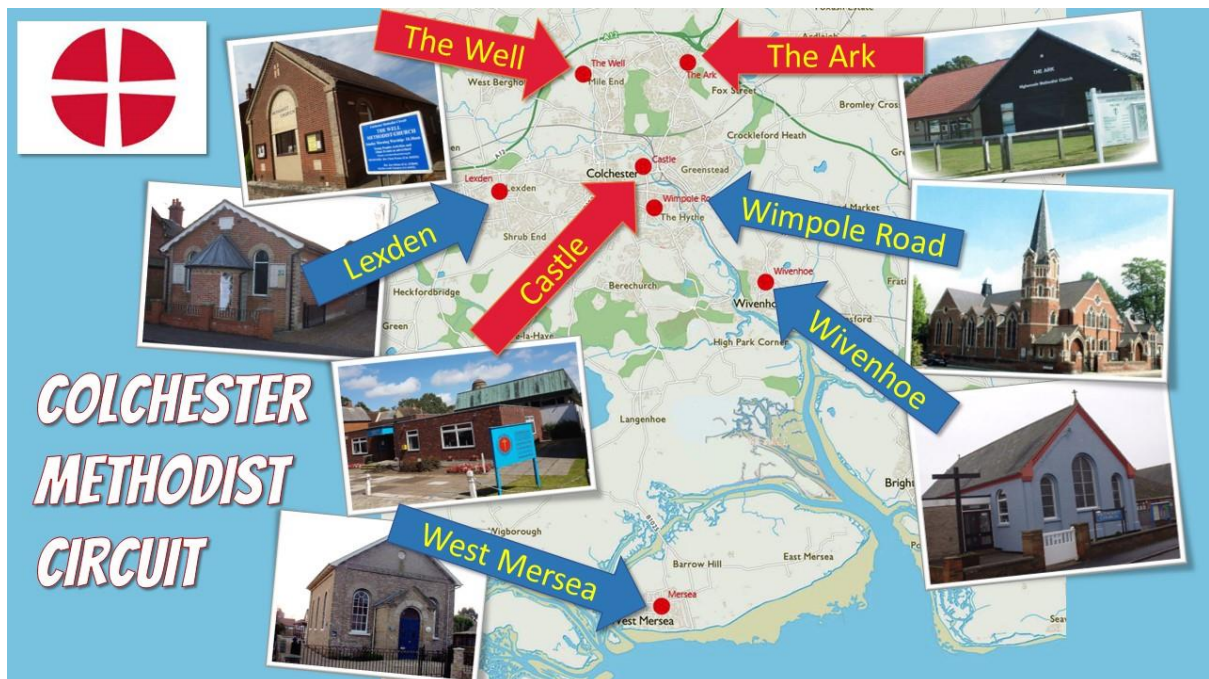


Colchester Methodist Circuit

Newsletter

Edition 3 – June 2023 (redacted)



WORK on the Colchester Methodist Circuit's new website – being developed by the Circuit's communications team – has reached an advanced stage and as part of the re-design Delia from Castle has produced the above location map of the seven churches which will now also feature in the quarterly Circuit newsletters. Communication and co-operation remain a key focus for the Circuit leadership team and the new location map is a welcome addition to the tools of communication.

LETTER: From Superintendent, Rev Chris Preece



Dear Friends,

As I sat down to write this, I looked out the window at the huge amount of growth that has suddenly appeared on the trees, bushes, and plants outside. Spring has definitely sprung! It is lovely to see the range of flowers in bloom and the sun shining more as well. Just as the seasons have been changing, we recognise too, that we are in a season of change within the Circuit.

Back in early March, we held a SPA? day where we considered how we Serve the Present Age. It was a day facilitated by the District Discipleship Enabler, Angela Brydon and the District Property Officer, Steve Watson. They helped us to think about some possible approaches to mission and since then we have been considering as churches the next steps forward.

As we look ahead to the summer months, we also acknowledge the upcoming changes in the team. On 16th July, 6pm at Wimpole Road, we meet as a Circuit to thank Rev Joe Adams' ministry among us as he prepares to leave the Circuit to take up another appointment closer to family. Dave has been a huge support to Joe, and we thank him for all that he has done. At this same service we will be celebrating with Phil B on his 50th anniversary of being a Local Preacher.

Times of change can bring feelings of great uncertainty for all sorts of reasons. We are reminded that God is always with us, walking alongside us in Jesus and that the Holy Spirit is alive and active in the world right here and now. Some of the imagery used in the psalms reminds us that God is our rock and our refuge. It is in these times that we can place our trust in God who is our rock and always dependable, however we might be feeling. There are times where we need to turn to Jesus who acts as our refuge and where we can place our feelings of uncertainty knowing that he will care for us and bring us his peace.

We also acknowledge the time of change that this is for Rev Hannah Chun who will (subject to Conference) be joining the Circuit in September. As a date further ahead for our diaries, her Welcome Service will be held on Friday 1st September, 7.30pm at Wimpole Road where the Chair of District, Rev Dr David Chapman will be preaching.

For all those facing a time of change, and for us as a Circuit, we bring before God, who is our rock and our refuge, all the feelings that we have. Please hold everyone in your prayers at this time as we continue to support one another in the months and years to come.

God bless,
Chris

NEWS FROM: the Circuit

FAREWELL and welcome services for Rev Joe Adams and Rev Hannah Chun will take place at Wimpole Road on 16th July and 1st September respectively. Timings and further details will be circulated in due course.

MONTHLY walks have been enjoyed by a number of people around the circuit. Derek C reports here on the April and May walks:

Hillhouse Wood (April) - It was a little muddy in places underfoot and there was a cool breeze moving the occasional cloud across the sky but this did not deter Kathy, Clive, Carol, Chrissie, Janet B, Jenny, Janet S, Geoff, Jan, Ian, Sylvia, Andrew and Derek from enjoying a walk amongst the bluebells. Although they needed a few warm days to be at their very best, the bluebells were far enough out in flower to provide a colourful cover to the woodland floor. The party walked together for the first mile of open countryside and those who elected to do 3 miles then entered the wood whilst those wishing to walk the 5 miles followed a series of footpaths before then entering the wood. Thanks are due to Sylvia and Andrew who were the guides to the shorter walk and to Kathy who made a kind offer to provide a cup of tea at the end of the afternoon.

Stour Valley Walk from Wormingford (May) - This was a walk in two parts. On the Tuesday prior to the planned day of the walk, 9th May, Carol, Clive and Derek walked the planned route just to make sure all the paths were accessible and on 9th May, Jan, Geoff and Derek did the walk. Others said afterwards, if the weather forecast hadn't mentioned the likelihood of rain and lightning, they would have come too! In the event and in sunshine, the Stour Valley Path was followed from Wormingford Church as it dropped steeply on the flood plain of the Stour. At the picturesque Bures Mill, the river was crossed and field paths were used on the Suffolk bank to reach Smallbridge Hall after which it was back into Essex and uphill to return to the church.

More walks are planned and all are welcome to join. The next will be in the Colne Valley on Tuesday, 20th June, starting beneath the viaduct at Chappel (adjacent to the Wakes Colne Chappel Corner bus stop and close to the village shop). This walk will follow the Essex Way and the course of the River Colne as it flows towards Colchester. The walk will commence at 2.15pm after the arrival of the No. 88 bus which leaves Osborne Street at 1.40pm and can be boarded at several stops in Lexden Road and then Halstead Road at about 1.50pm. For anyone requiring a walk of approximately 3 miles, it will be possible to take the bus back into Colchester from Ford Street (the No. 88 calls there at 10 and 40 minutes past each hour). The full walk of approximately 6 miles will end in Stanway via Cook's Mill and Iron Latch.

Designated parking in this area is available if required. Please contact a fellow walker or our Circuit Administrator on 07797 077736 or via colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com for further details.

Walks of approximately 3 and 5 miles are planned for 11th July at Boxted; a 5 mile walk at Nayland on 8th August; and a 3 mile walk at Shrub End on 22nd August.

From Lexden

DURING our recent Church Council meeting we discussed the seemingly insurmountable problems of an ageing membership and the difficulties of fulfilling essential roles at the church and we continue to have conversations. While we prayerfully consider the way forward we would ask members in the circuit to pray for us all as well.

From Castle

AT our annual Church Meeting in March, a presentation was given on the results of the Circuit SPA day. Much discussion was had, especially once we had broken into small groups and a range of posters were produced. A small working group has been formed to further the work, which we will discuss at our next Church Council having consulted the whole Church family. Feedback has started to come in and we look forward to moving on in a positive way.

IN the run up to Easter, we were able to share in the events of Holy Week, with in person worship and fellowship for the first time in some years. Following our Soup and Snack lunch on Maundy Thursday, Rev Chris led us through a very meaningful service of Holy Communion. This prepared us for our service of readings, hymns and meditation on Good Friday. We were joined by our friends from St. Botolph's Church, who took an active part in our worship. Again, prepared and led by Rev Chris and undertaken without announcement, we were led through the events of that day in a very meaningful and thought provoking way. One of our refugee friends took the part of Simon by carrying the wooden cross to the front of the church. After the service we enjoyed coffee and hot cross buns with our friends and visitors. We celebrated the joy of our Risen Christ with Holy Communion on Easter day. During the service each member of the congregation was able to come forward and place a flower on our Easter Cross, which we placed in the big window overlooking the Castle Park at the close of the service. Once again it was a joy to welcome many visitors and friends.

A LOCAL group has started using Castle twice a week as a base for teaching English as a second language to migrants and refugees from many countries. The classes have gone from strength to strength, with demand being very high. We are pleased we can host this very important work in our community.

THE Bridgeway sewing and dressmaking group want to thank everyone who has donated fabric to them. It has been greatly appreciated by the refugee ladies in the group. However, material is still in short supply and if anyone has unwanted fabric, suitable for making garments for the ladies and their children, please contact Jan C and we can arrange collection.

WE have copies of Hymns & Psalms which we no longer need and would be happy to give them to any church which might use them. Please contact Chris P if you are interested and he will arrange delivery.

From The Ark

AT the beginning of April The Ark celebrated its anniversary and we were pleased to welcome Rev Catherine Bowstead back to preach. It was good to catch up with her and Mike, who took the opportunity to catch up with a number of circuit friends on the day before. They were thrilled to be back in Colchester and helped celebrate the church's anniversary with a roast lunch at The Ark.

EASTER was commemorated with a Maundy Thursday evening communion service with Rev Chris Preece, followed by a light supper, a Good Friday reflection led by Rachel and Barbara, an Easter morning communion breakfast with Rev Chris and an Easter Day celebration service with Eddie L.

LOOKING forward to the summer a number of social events are planned. These started last week with a quiz night in aid of Christian Aid and will round off in October with an evening of Beetle Drive and Scattergories, both family games which work well in small groups. These events will raise funds for charity and circuit friends were and are warmly invited. Summer garden parties for church members have been resurrected and three members will be hosting afternoon tea parties through the summer months.

REGULAR attenders of the Friday Zoom coffee morning, no doubt inspired by the regular chats about garden birdlife and favourite walks, have expressed a wish to go on a church nature walk and this will be organised for the early summer.

IN the meantime, important mission planning is under discussion at The Ark. We have been thrilled to welcome a number of new frequent worshippers and those who have now become regular worshippers are being encouraged to take part in these discussions.

From Wimpole Road

OUR minds went back to three years ago when we were in lockdown and the Easter celebrations were very much muted. Sometimes it is only when we are deprived of things that we realise how much we really value them. Following the end of restrictions it has been good gradually to get back to normal and yet move on with new ways of working.

SO this year it was great to see a good attendance of people at the full programme of Easter services at Wimpole Road, celebrating the joy of the Resurrection, enthusiastically replying to the words, 'Christ is Risen', and singing the well-known and loved hymns on Easter Sunday. The church had been stripped bare on Maundy Thursday but, due to the efforts of various people, by the Easter Day service on Sunday it was looking particularly beautiful.

WE associate spring with new life and it has been good in recent weeks to welcome Sonia and Dave into church membership. If you regularly attend worship but are not a member, maybe it's time for you to think about taking that step. If so, do speak to our Minister or a Steward.

ANOTHER sign of new life was the baptism of Henry and Edward, two delightful little boys. Do keep this young family in your prayers in the days that lie ahead for them.

SPRING also brings the hope of warmer weather as we look ahead to all that the coming months may promise.

WE looked forward to Pentecost in May, when we will unite with St. Stephen's for a service on the Recreation Ground, hoping for better weather than last year!

IN July there will be the Church BBQ at Peter B's bungalow and also the Holiday Club, which will take place a little earlier than usual.

ON a sad note, on Sunday 16th July we will say goodbye to Rev Joe Adams and Dave. We will miss them but wish them well in their new stationing, closer to their families. Do hold in your prayers our incoming Minister, Rev Hannah Chun. This will be a new role for her and in the meantime she and her family will have lots of arrangements to make prior to her taking up duty in September.

DO also pray for all our mid-week activities, that they will be times of fellowship, friendship and fun and ultimately bring people to know the Risen Christ.

From The Well

AS we said in the last Newsletter, we envisaged our Warm Space (weekly) - now "Warm Welcome" - and Community Food Pantry (fortnightly) to continue into the foreseeable future on our premises. This has been the case but the opening times are now from 12 noon to 4 pm.

AT the March Circuit Meeting we reported the good news of ecumenical co-operation and community involvement that we enjoy at The Well. This was well illustrated when we had a Myland Churches Together presence at the 'Coronation Picnic in the Park' organised by Myland Community Council, on a local playing field. Between the churches we offered craft activities, balloon modelling, baby-care tent, nail painting, temporary tattoos, coronation cakes – all for free! We also had a Prayer Tree and it was good to share in conversations with those who live in our community.

RECENTLY we were blessed in the unexpected news that a lady from Boxted left a substantial legacy in her will to the Methodist Church there, which is now part of The Well. The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes have informed us that the money now rests with The Well and we will be considering prayerfully how best to use this wonderful gift.

FOLLOWING the Circuit 'SPA' Day, we started our Mission Planning at a meeting on Sunday 14th May led by Rev Chris. We had a time of free thinking as to what might be our hopes and dreams for the future. Chris will collate this ready for our next meeting.

From Wivenhoe

CHURCH life in Wivenhoe continues on its normal cycle of worship, service and witness. The focus of this is centred around Sunday worship at 11am, Knit and Natter and Ladies Fellowship on Thursday afternoons and our monthly Saturday Coffee Morning.

HOWEVER, on Good Friday we joined with the other four Wivenhoe Churches for our annual walk of witness and reflective worship, organised by 'Churches Together in Wivenhoe'. About two dozen of us walked and prayed along the length of Wivenhoe carrying a cross. We then assembled with others at the Methodist Church for worship led by our own Rev Joe Adams. The Church was full.

ON Whitsunday at 12 noon members and friends from all Churches will meet in the Annexe at St Mary's to celebrate the Church's birthday with coffee and cake.

BEING an elderly congregation means that the loss of members is inevitable and three of our members have died recently and a number of other people have various health problems, including two of our local preachers. Please remember them in your prayers. Pastoral care is a very high priority at Wivenhoe with frequent home visits and phone calls taking place. Weekly newsletters are either emailed out or hand delivered to all.

OUR monthly coffee mornings in aid of the 'Beacon of Hope' charity being run by our own Dr Bagamba and his wife in and around Bunia, Democratic Republic of Congo are always well attended by people from all churches and none.

LADIES Fellowship has a varied programme. They have recently had talks from the Blood Runners and Wivenhoe Foodbank and been entertained by Wivenhoe Hoolies shanty choir.

KNIT and Natter also continues monthly on a Thursday. Blankets and other items were sent to Zambia some time ago and pictures and videos of their distribution have been received.

WE are sorry that Rev Joe Adams is leaving us shortly and wish him and Dave every blessing in their new home. We look forward to Hannah's arrival and pray that she and the family will quickly and happily settle into life and work in the Colchester circuit.

From West Mersea

OUR Warm Spaces venture continues on Wednesdays from 11am until 1.30pm at the request of our guests. It has now become a Community Lunch, where mums bring their babies/preschool children to meet up with other adults in our community. We have the opportunity, together with members of our congregation for lunch and a chat. It has been such a joy to see the interaction between the ages and to meet up with people we might otherwise never have come into contact with. One member of our congregation said "that strangers have become friends".

OUR Baby and Toddler group continues to meet on Thursdays from 9am until 11.30am. We have a full morning with some parents dropping in after the school run and others drifting in throughout the morning. We have bought some new toys with an unexpected donation from "Round the Island Committee".

WE are involved in "Churches Together in Mersea" and we have been busy planning our annual Beach Club event which will be held in the first week of the school summer holidays 24th to 28th July. It is based on Scripture Union's "God's Wonderful World". Over the last few weeks planning has been taking place, and we are now concentrating on producing a booklet for each child based on the theme.

SADLY, we say goodbye to Rev Joe and Dave as they move on to a new Circuit. They will be greatly missed, especially by the those who have been attending our "Warm Spaces" and for Rev Joe's uplifting services and pastoral care for our congregation here on Mersea. Folk from other churches on the Island have also enjoyed working with him during "Churches Together". We look forward to Rev Hannah Chun and her family joining us in September.

FROM THE CIRCUIT DIARY:

8 th June	Leadership Meeting
14 th June	Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Meeting
27 th June	Circuit Meeting
16 th July	Farewell Service for Rev Joe Adams at Wimpole Road
1 st Sept	Welcome Service for Rev Hannah Chun at Wimpole Road
4 th Sept	Leadership Meeting
12 th Sept	Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Meeting
20 th Sept	Circuit Meeting

DEADLINES!

- *Please submit your plan requests to our Circuit Administrator at colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com by 17th July 2023.*
- *The next newsletter will be distributed at the beginning of September so please let Judith W have your church news by 18th August 2023*

For any enquiries regarding this newsletter please contact our Circuit Administrator on 07796 077736 or at colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com