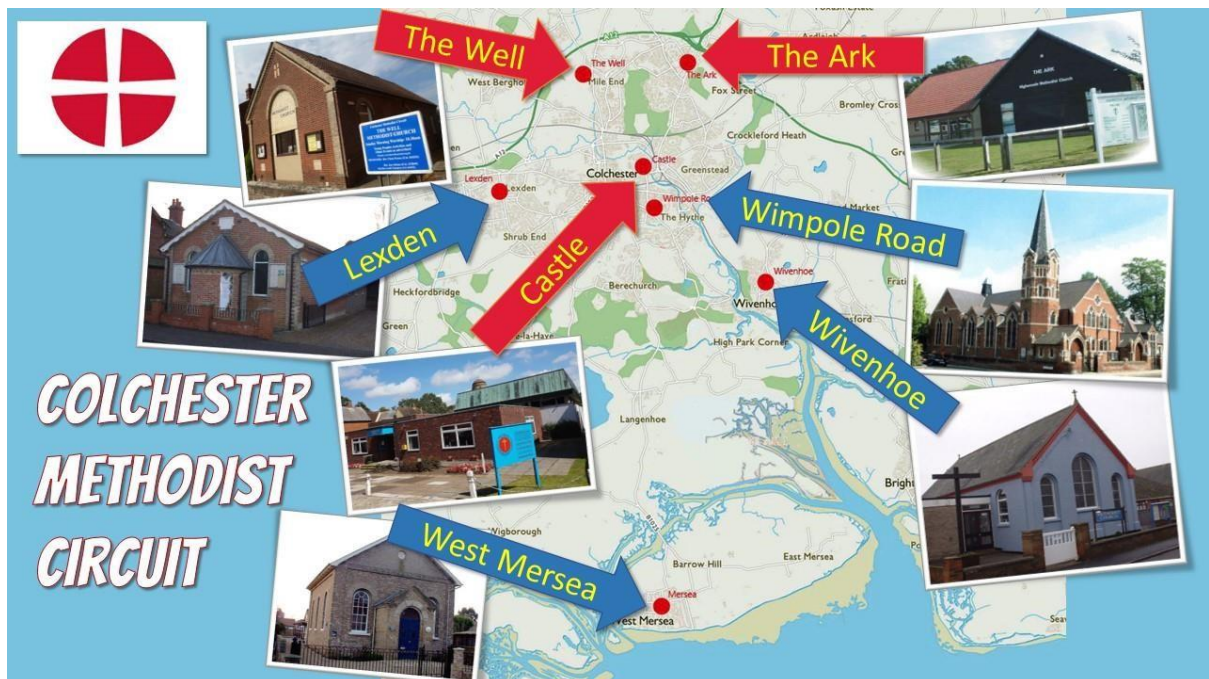


# Colchester Methodist Circuit

## Newsletter

Edition 7 – Autumn 2024 (redacted version)



### Letter from our Superintendent, Rev Chris Preece

Dear Friends,

As you may be aware, during August the Circuit Bible Studies have focused on the characters and quotes from Winnie the Pooh. This has been a different way into considering some Bible passages and whilst seemingly a lighter subject, the depth of conversation has not been compromised in any way at all.

Winnie the Pooh says, ‘hello there, are you on an expotition too?’<sup>1</sup> and what a good thing to ask! The June Circuit Meeting agreed the Mission Plan and every church has had a copy of the priorities to be displayed on the notice board. Each church and the Circuit are on an ‘expotition’ where we are now in the position of starting to implement the agreed actions. It will be a continuation of the work we are doing together as well as the expedition into new places and situations. My thanks to everyone who has contributed in any way to bringing this plan to this point. I know, too, that churches continue to think and discern the ways forward they believe God is calling them to at this time.

Winnie the Pooh is a bear of great wisdom. He knows ‘it isn’t much good having anything exciting, if you can’t share it with somebody.’<sup>2</sup> The Circuit Summer Celebration was a great time for us to come together and to share with one another in games, food and worship. The planning group deserve special mention here for making everything seem so relaxed which could only be the case because everything had been so well organised.

Piglet asks, ‘how do you spell love?’ whilst Winnie the Pooh replies, ‘you don’t spell it, you feel it.’<sup>3</sup> God’s love is tangible in so many ways. We learn of God’s love through Jesus and the movement of the Holy Spirit today which demonstrates how God brings us all together. This is together in what we do, how we are with each other and in how we work together. It has been lovely to see people coming together to work alongside each other and begin to share with one another. As we come to the start of a new Methodist year, we do so looking ahead to how we can develop this further.

Piglet recognises how lucky he is ‘to have such unique and wonderful friends.’<sup>4</sup> God created us to be unique, nobody is the same as anyone else, and God made us in this way, so we all have something to bring. This can be seen in the Circuit Bible Studies which are held on Tuesday evenings by Zoom at 7.30pm for about an hour. Whilst Winnie the Pooh has been the star for August, he (and several other people) are on holiday in September, so we will begin again on 1st October. Some people contribute, others listen and reflect but everyone adds to the group in differing ways. Why not come along when we’ll be looking at a new study series, probably based on the Old Testament. The evening Zoom services at 6.30pm on a Sunday evening are also a time of great blessing and are held on the first, second and fourth Sundays. Why not come along? These are both times where time is spent being together but also then in fellowship and developing new friendships with one another.

There is much to celebrate and much to do! God calls us all as disciples to be with him, to learn from Jesus and to be sent out in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we continue to grow together, to be alongside one another, we will discern how we can all play our unique part in God’s mission here in Colchester.

Happy New Methodist Year!

God bless,  
Chris

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<sup>1</sup> Disney Christopher Robin, *The Little Book of Pooh-isms with help from Piglet, Rabbit, Eeyore, Owl and Tigger!*, (USA: Disney Press, 2018), p.19

<sup>2</sup> A A Milne with decorations by E H Shepard, *Winnie the Pooh, The Little Book of Wisdom*, (Great Britain: Egmont Books Limited, 1999)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.southernliving.com/culture/friendship-quotes-winne-the-pooh> [Last accessed 18.8.24]

<sup>4</sup> *The Little Book of Pooh-isms*, p.137

## **NEWS: from The Circuit**

**ON** the last Sunday in June the Colchester Circuit held its Summer Celebrations in the garden and home of Peter in Layer de la Haye, and we are very grateful to Peter for his kindness and for being such a wonderful host.

The theme for the afternoon and early evening was Seeking God's Heart in a Garden. I am really grateful to all those who took part and pleased that every church in the Circuit was represented and took leading roles in the closing service.

There were more than 50 people in attendance and they started arriving from about 3.45 pm. The Celebration was divided into three phases.

On arrival we sat and chatted, enjoying a cup of tea or partaking in the various activities. The more active played giant-sized Connect 4, garden-sized Jenga, Molkky (a skittles-styled game) or the Well's popular ball and bucket game (and in many cases had a go at all four). The latter is a popular attraction at many community events - and I can see why. For the less energetic there were games and activities in the summer house and gazebos, which included making church flowers, thinking about Green Church, and discussing and writing of what speaks to them about God's heart in Psalm of the Day.

There was a scratch choir led by Rev Chris and rhythmic drumming and hymn singing from friends from Ghana who attend Wimpole Road.

At 5 o'clock we all rested and enjoyed our picnic teas and continued our conversations with friends from around the Circuit.

The outdoor evening service was led by Rev Paul and musically accompanied by Rev Chris. All seven churches from the Circuit took an active part. Rev Hannah called us to worship, Rev Chris gave the blessing and the address was given by Rev Paul.

There were readings by Ann and Phil, a personal testimony by Alan (a gardener and local preacher), a choir item, and a sketch set in the Garden of Eden by Judith and Ron, suitably attired with fig leaves (over clothing!). Jan spoke passionately about becoming an Eco Church.

Methodists always enjoy singing and to do so in the open air in such beautiful surroundings was a real joy. We were fortunate with the weather, with periods of sun and cloud but no rain.

It was a really enjoyable time together and our thanks go to all those who organized it, took part, worked so hard on the day (and a special mention goes to Christine and Andrew) and all who attended.

**Tony, Senior Circuit Steward**

**LEADERS** of Worship and Preachers Homes (formerly LPMA homes) has four sites located at Westcliff on Sea, Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire, Milborne Port in Dorset and Minehead in Somerset, with about 90 residents between them.

This year the organisation is celebrating being in existence for 75 years.

To commemorate this anniversary, Robert, a retired teacher and a friend of ours, has recently undertaken a cycle ride in stages to visit all of the homes starting from LWPH head office at Westcliff-on-Sea on April 16. The journey ended at Minehead on May 31.

The following are some edited extracts from his subsequent report:

“I had a good journey - despite some poor weather at times – and the bike kept going. So did I. The best parts were riding on cycle routes along disused railway lines – good surfaces, no traffic, plenty of wild flowers to see and birds to hear, time to relax the mind.

Mileage on bike: 640; Mileage by train to avoid A roads: 45; Punctures :3.

At each site visited I was able to join celebration events to commemorate 75 years of LWPH. At Woodhall Spa the theme was *This is the Day* which seemed salutary as I found cycling and wondering where to eat and stay for the night did wonders for focusing the mind on The Day!

At Minehead I “arrived” several times – for filming purposes – gave a brief account of the journey and experiences before sharing in a celebratory cake with “Well Done” in the icing.

During the journey, I had numerous conversations and a regular initiator of conversations was the presence of two toy bears located atop the front nearside pannier.”

The focus of Robert’s journey was not to be a fundraiser but to raise people’s awareness of the care given to the residents in LWP Homes. Nevertheless, supporters have kindly made donations totaling over £3,000 for LWP Homes.

Incidentally, Robert is neither a Worship Leader nor a Local Preacher.

**Viv & Geoff**

**THE** theme for the Methodist Women in Britain Easter Offering 2024 was “Let justice roll on like a river.” Once again, the theme has proved very relevant.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this appeal; the total raised from this Circuit was £1,256.50.

**Viv**

**from Lexden:**

**MEMBERS** of our congregation were recently invited to the birthday party of our retired organist Laurie. With sandwiches and savouries and three different types of cake we were really spoilt.

I was able to spend a few quiet moments with Laurie where he explained about musical meter and how to look for alternative tunes for hymns. Something that I need to do sometimes when using our digital music box. We really miss not having an organist nowadays.

**Christine**

## from Castle:

**UNEXPECTED** times of change can often be very disconcerting and we have found ourselves in such a situation at Castle over recent weeks.

Terry, our caretaker for the last ten years, handed in his notice at the end of May, taking us all by surprise. As we had enjoyed the services of a live-in caretaker for almost 54 years, it was important that we spent time in evaluating our needs and planning for the future.

During his tenure, Terry had been a great ambassador for Castle as he welcomed all those using our building during the week. Church members gathered at our last Open House at the end of June, to thank him for his work and wish him well in the future and present him with a card and gift.

Since Terry's departure, members have rallied round making themselves available to be on duty for the outside groups using our premises. We have a new group, "The Colchester Nepalese Society" using the building three times a week for exercise and English language classes. More enquiries are being received each week to use the building.

We employed contract cleaners to give the whole building including the caretaker's flat a deep clean and we are planning on using them on an ongoing contract in the future.

After many meetings and much discussion by our Leadership Team, we now have plans in place for ensuring the building can continue to be used to its full potential in the future.

## from The Ark:

**SUMMER** at the Ark is traditionally a time for fellowship when many of the church-based community activities are taking a break. Once a month members gather for a series of summer garden parties. Three gardens and homes are usually opened to the church family, although as the Circuit summer celebration was taken to be the first this year there remained two to host (thankyou Sandra & Mark and John & Pat), with those attending bringing a wide variety of (mainly) home cooked savories and cakes to enjoy in the sunshine. It is good to be able to focus on fellowship and team building before the start of the new church year.

**FOR** more than a decade there has been a defibrillator installed on the outside front wall of the church. Its precise location is registered with the emergency services and in the event of a life-threatening emergency precise information about how to get it out for use will be given by the ambulance service, pending the arrival of a paramedic or ambulance crew. Location details are logged onto a special website that lists all defibrillators in the area.

The defibrillator at The Ark has been in use this summer, for the first time since its installation. The Ark's defib administrator received a message to say it had been used and so needed to be checked and re-set. Whether it saved a life will never be known, but hosting such an essential piece of life-saving equipment is part of The Ark's service to the community and we are glad that someone in need was able to get the benefit of our machine.

**AS** part of the Ark's continuing drive to reduce its carbon footprint internal lights are gradually being replaced by LED lights as the old ones fail. The leadership team is also planning to have motion sensor-triggered lighting installed in the toilets, as lights there are often left on by community users

of the church and are a waste of energy. Grant funding is available from both the Circuit and the District and donations have been offered from within the membership to assist with the cost.

### **from Wimpole Road:**

**JUNE** was a very exciting month in the life of Wimpole Road – the month in which we celebrated the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the church building and made exciting plans to carry the church forward into the next 100 years and beyond.

Sunday June 9<sup>th</sup> was the church's actual birthday. The church was lined with displays of its history and there was splendid photographic footage televised both in the Church and the Parlour, with photographs spanning much of our history and past events.

While we remember the happy times of our past, we also look ahead. There are plans afoot to bring after church tea and coffee INTO church – which will hopefully encourage more people to stay and enjoy friendship and company.

**WHILST** the Open Space Coffee Mornings are a huge outreach to the local community, we are also delighted that the idea to have a Prayer Letter Box is working, and many requests for prayers are being received.

**AT** the end of July, the Holiday Club returned for three days and we discovered how the various donations of tights, milk bottle lids, toilet rolls etc. were transformed in the children's craft activities!

**THIS** year's New Town Community Day was fast approaching (at the time of writing) on Saturday August 31<sup>st</sup> from 11 am on the Recreation Ground.

There were to be numerous stalls, various amusements, a variety of entertainment, including a Fun Dog Show, refreshments and a BBQ.

This is a community event, jointly organized by Wimpole Road and St. Stephen's churches, along with many other folk from the New Town area.

The nominated charities this year were St. Helena Hospice and Autism Anglia.

### **from The Well:**

**WE** have employed a Quantity Surveyor to give us an estimate of the cost for a partial rebuild and partial refurbishment of our church premises. We are now at the stage of deciding what might be feasible from a cost point of view, based on these estimates. Please watch this space!

**PACKED** lunches were provided by us for Make Lunch Myland during the summer term every Tuesday from our premises. These were made available to anyone between 11am and 1pm and could be taken away or eaten on site. For two of the weeks, families met at Highwoods Country Park for activities and our lunches were taken to them there.

**AFTERNOON** tea was held during June for everyone connected with The Well and proved to be a very happy occasion. The Myland Churches Together barbecue, planned for Sunday August 11<sup>th</sup>, unfortunately had to be cancelled because of the extremely hot weather conditions.

**OUR** Sunday worship each week is the most important part of our fellowship and is a blessing to us. We are grateful to all who lead our services and to the volunteers who, each week, contribute to the worship, but best of all is the sense that the Holy Spirit is with us and encouraging us. To God be the Glory!

**from Wivenhoe:**

**LIFE** has gone on much as usual in Wivenhoe Methodist Church over the summer. About 25 of us regularly join together for Sunday morning worship, which is followed by tea, coffee and biscuits. People are generally in no rush to leave. Several of our congregation are frail or housebound, so pastoral care through visits and phone calls remains an essential part of our mission, as it always has.

**OUR** monthly Saturday coffee mornings remain popular, with as many as 50 people attending – from all local Churches and none.

**THURSDAY** afternoon Knit and Natter and Fellowship meetings have continued through the summer. In July the local shanty choir 'The Hoolies' entertained. About 25 people attended and £82.40 was donated to Emmaus Colchester, the 'Hoolies' chosen charity.

**LOOKING** back I see the Circuit undertook a review called 'Vision for the Future' in 2005. In 2004 the then Colchester Circuit consisted of 14 Churches, 2 of which later became part of the Tendring Circuit. The remaining 12 Churches had a combined membership of 621. Wivenhoe had a membership of 50. Wivenhoe's current membership is 42, so our numbers have stood up reasonably well over the last 20 years.

**Phil**

**from West Mersea:**

**IT** has been a good summer at Mersea, so good to see the summer visitors who enjoy the beach and sometimes join us for our services.

**OUR** church anniversary was most enjoyable. The concert on the Saturday was a swing band concert featuring Glen Miller tunes and Tommy Dorsey and the Duke's well-known music. We sang along to hymns with syncopated tunes and had a jolly good weekend celebrating the 163 years that the Methodist Church has stood in the same place in Mersea. Our anniversary service on the Sunday was a grand service led by Rev Hannah.

**THE** beach club has been a great success and without rain this year to challenge anyone. About 200 young people heard the message that Jesus loves them and, in true Olympic fashion, how to become champions.

We look forward now to Autumn and harvest and then on to Christmas.

## **FROM THE CIRCUIT DIARY:**

7 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at Wivenhoe from 9am
18 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Circuit Meeting at The Ark from 7.30pm
26 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Creation Care & Climate Justice meeting at Wimpole Road from 3pm
29 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Circuit Evening Service – venue to be confirmed
12 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at Wimpole Road from 9am
9 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at Castle from 9am
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec	Circuit Meeting via 'Zoom' from 7:30pm
8 <sup>th</sup> Dec	'Blue Christmas' Circuit Service
14 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at The Ark from 9am

### **In addition;**

Circuit Evening 'Zoom' Services take place on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month from 6:30pm.

Circuit Bible Study takes place on many Tuesday evenings throughout the year (via Zoom). Please note there will be a break during September with studies resuming on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

**All are very welcome and further information on any of the above is available;**

From our Circuit Administrator at: [colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com](mailto:colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com)

By viewing the Circuit diary at: <https://colchestermethodists.org.uk>

### **DEADLINES!**

Please submit your plan requests for December/January/February by 10<sup>th</sup> October via our Circuit Administrator at [colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com](mailto:colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com)

The next newsletter will be distributed at the beginning of December so please let Judith have your church news by 18<sup>th</sup> November.