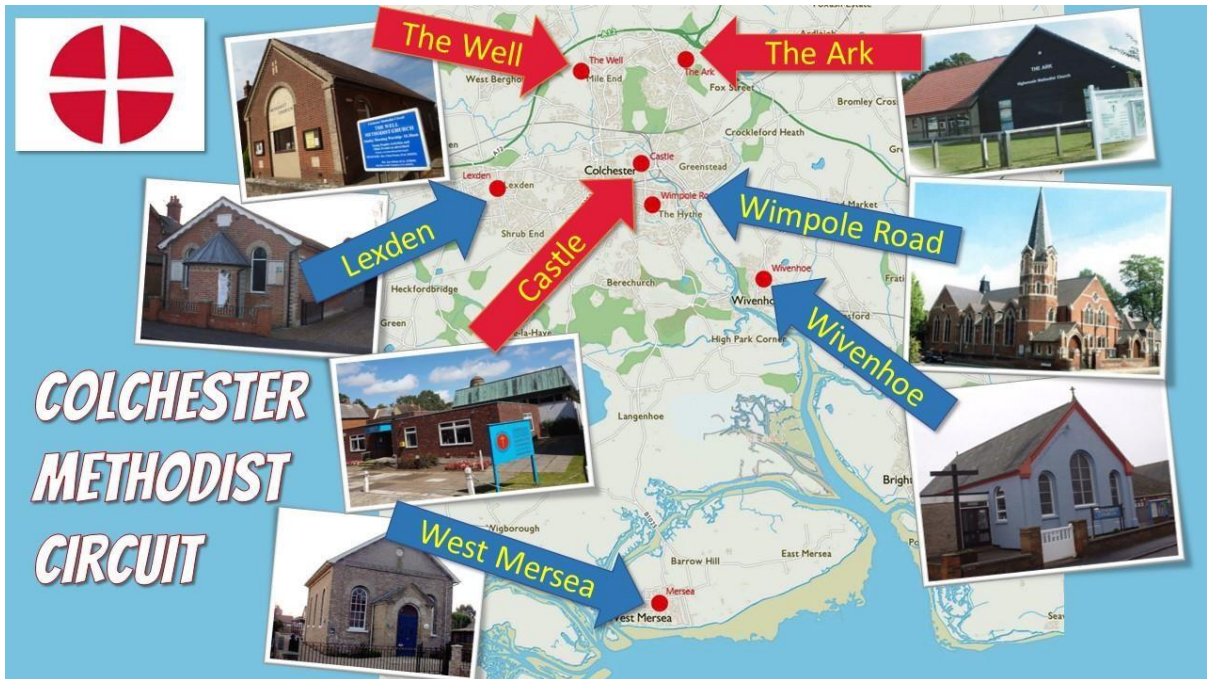


# Colchester Methodist Circuit

## Newsletter

Edition 6 – Summer 2024



### Letter from our Superintendent, Rev Chris Preece

Dear Friends,

It's the time of year where when looking out at the garden there is always a constant flurry of activity which is greater now than at other times. There are some blue tits nesting in the birdbox and so there is a huge amount of 'comings and goings.' It's fascinating to watch and then to reflect on. The parents are preparing their young for the next stage of their lives and they are building the foundation of all that is to come in the cycle of the coming time.

It seems that coming to this Circuit newsletter there is a similarity. There is the busyness of 'now' and the preparations for the coming year that take place. Once we reach July and August there is sometimes a little slowing before September arrives and there is a new flurry of activity once again.

The foundations for the start of the Connexional year take place now so that the cycle of the year can begin in September.

In the Church year, we are in the period where we focus in the Lectionary on a time of spiritual growth. Some of the passages we consider will help us to focus on our discipleship and relationship with God and how, through the teachings of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we deepen our discipleship in a way that enables us to share our faith with others.

It may be in this time we look back over this last season with Jesus and ask where we have seen God at work. We may begin to prepare the foundations for this next season. As a Circuit, we continue to consider our mission plans and how we can reach out to others. We are setting the foundations in place for that. We look back as individual churches and ask where we are seeing God at work so we can build the foundations for the future.

We also give thanks for the work that Paul Howes has done within the Circuit as he prepares to move house. Paul continues to be a great support across the churches, and we are delighted that he will be keeping in touch over the next twelve months in various ways. Thank you, Paul, for all you have done, and we wish you well with the move and to settling in a new place.

We are also looking forward to a time where we can come together once again and socialise with one another at the Circuit Summer Celebration. More details will follow later in this newsletter. It is a time where we can seek God in the garden and see the places of growth in our lives as individuals and in coming together as a Circuit to share food, fun and fellowship.

As we read this newsletter once again, we do so to ask where we can see God working. When a quieter time comes (whenever that might be!), I hope you are able to take stock and reflect on how God is preparing you for the next stage of your journey as a disciple in God's world today. We continue to work together to share with one another and to find the ways in which we can express our life and faith with each other and in the communities in which we live and serve God.

God bless,  
Chris



## **NEWS - from The Circuit:**

**FOLLOWING** on from the success of the Circuit Christmas Celebration and by popular demand, a Circuit Summer Celebration will take place in The Folly, Layer de la Haye, at the home of Peter Broom of Wimpole Road, on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June.

Peter has kindly opened his spacious garden to the circuit to enable us to get together for an afternoon of fellowship, games and communal preparation for an open-air evening service on the theme of Seeking God's Heart in a Garden. Starting at 4pm and concluding with a 6pm service, the

afternoon will include music, worship workshops and a chance to share fellowship over a bring your own picnic. Hot drinks will be made available. Do please bring a chair or picnic rug if you are able as Peter has plenty of space but not necessarily enough chairs to go around!

We are very grateful to Peter for his generosity in hosting this event, and to Rev Paul Howes who will be guiding the worship and activities in the afternoon. Stewards will be on hand to guide visitors to Peter's garden and there is plenty of roadside parking in The Folly.

**MANY** will remember the service of accreditation of local preachers Sally Crafer and Joe Navoka which took place at Castle in December and will be aware from this newsletter that Rachel van Stavoren of The Ark is currently undergoing training and study to become a Worship Leader. Sally, Joe and Rachel have all been featured on the Connexional website in a series of stories of local preachers and worship leaders. [If you would like to see what they have to say, the stories can be found here.](#) Sally also featured in a video put together by the Connexion sharing her story of becoming a local preacher – [You can hear Sally's story here.](#)

#### **from Lexden:**

**BY** the time you read this Rev Paul Howes will have shared his last service with us, Pentecost. Paul came to our circuit as a supernumerary and then in September 2016 agreed to act as the minister for Lexden on a part time basis for a year. This was when Ken was busy trying to set up a new church in North Colchester.

We were delighted to have Paul who along with Mel and at that time, a very little Beth, soon became a familiar part of our church and took part in many church activities. One memorable occasion was a Passover feast on Maundy Thursday in April 2017. This included unleavened bread, bitter herbs and a dish with grains and fruit which I think was called Charoset.

As well as Sunday services Paul also took part in our Thursday morning prayer times. Occasionally leading and often painting a picture of a scene from that day's reading.

Paul is moving to Ipswich to be nearer to Mel's place of work and at a time when Beth is changing school. We wish them well for the future and we will keep them in our prayers.

#### **from The Ark:**

**IT** hardly seems possible that so many years have passed since Rev Bernard Arnold had a plan to grow a church on the newly-developing estate of Highwoods but this Easter marked the 30th anniversary of The Ark and we celebrated in April with an anniversary service accompanied by members of the Arkestra, followed by a roast lunch. A number of the founding members still regularly worship with us but because of holidays and ailments only two of the anniversary congregation confessed to having been there from the start. The real blessing was in seeing all those who now regularly attend, or frequently visit, and who wanted to celebrate the event as a church family together. The original plan for The Ark was for it to be a multi-purpose building and since the foundation stone was laid, we have been proud to provide a home for many community organisations and groups, often offering financial support by the way our letting fees can be structured according to the needs and financial circumstances of the various community groups who want to call the Ark their home. The church building is very well used, which can create some difficulties especially as we do not have a caretaker and seek to fulfill our aims and promises as an Eco Church to recycle and encourage recycling wherever possible. Our desires and well-placed notices expressing the rules about waste disposal have at times been ignored and we have

recently had to deal with a mouse invasion in the kitchen. A rather expensive intervention by the council's pest control team resolved the problem and the prospect of meeting up with a mouse appears to have persuaded the users of The Ark to be a little more diligent with their rubbish disposal!

**DESPITE** having a defibrillator on the outside wall of our building it was discovered that the emergency services were not aware of its existence. This has now been remedied and we are listed on the Defib finder website.

**THE** Highwoods satellite of the FoodBank is now based at The Ark and the volunteer workers are happy with their new home. There is talk of it being opened for another session in the week, at the moment it is open on a Monday morning, and we are still exploring further joint opportunities with St Luke's church who staff the FoodBank here.

**WE** continue to look for ways to reduce our carbon footprint and are currently exploring the options for cycle racks to be installed at The Ark to assist those who already cycle to the building and to encourage others to think about using a bicycle for transport.

### **from Wimpole Road:**

**AFTER** a circuit prayer meeting in Wivenhoe a couple of months ago, it was mentioned in discussion that if a stranger were to read the circuit newsletter, they would be left with a rosy picture of a very healthy circuit community. While this is true it raises the question: is this the whole story?

We do indeed have much to thank God for in the work being done in His name throughout the seven churches, and it is right that we celebrate and develop them to continue to share the Gospel.

As we approach our 120th Anniversary of witness in New Town, we want to ensure we are heading into another 120 years that are productive and effective in spreading the love of God in this place.

We would like to share some prayer intentions we have at Wimpole Road and ask you to join us in asking God for wisdom and guidance in a few of the things that cause us concern.

In our vision meeting, looking at our Mission Plan, we discussed how we might develop our worship to encourage and grow new disciples for Christ; that those who come through our doors continue to feel welcome and want to learn more of what it really means to love Jesus and accept his Grace and love. **How do we do that?**

We have an excellent band of committed volunteers who work tirelessly in Church appointments but it is a small group and the majority hold more than one responsibility (most are ready to receive a long service award and some are overdue!). We need a succession plan and a willingness for others to commit to this service. **How do we get one?**

We still have a yearning for young families to join us and a need for youth leadership. **How do we achieve this?**

We are sure we are not alone in wondering how situations such as these will be addressed, we are equally sure that by faith, with combined prayers and sharing of resources, the Holy Spirit will equip us well. **Will you pray with us?** To thank God for all that is past, all that is happening now and all that is to come. Thank you.

**from Wivenhoe:**

**FOR** us at Wivenhoe life has continued much as before, with Sunday Worship, Coffee Mornings, Ladies Fellowship and Knit and Natter. Recently our dear friend Alice died aged 98 and Hannah led a very meaningful funeral. We shared Good Friday with the other Wivenhoe Churches, having a Walk of Witness followed by a united act of worship. But life has been difficult for us, as in many churches, due to age-related problems and sickness. Much pastoral care has been and still is needed. This also means fewer people to fill church positions.

**THE** following message comes from Betty Rampling -

'At church we refer to our church family a lot. And what a real blessing and comfort it is when it works as a real loving family showing care, compassion and love.

Over the last nine months life has been tough. My husband Joe became very ill and needed much care. The house became like a railway station with so many people arriving and departing to look after him. He went into the hospice, where he died. Life changed dramatically. I was now responsible for everything. The prospect was frightening. The house is quiet with no trombone playing.

Then I had a fall which resulted in a fractured pelvis. This meant two weeks in hospital and home on Christmas Eve. The recovery time was long and painful. I have now been diagnosed with a complaint that means I am having to rely on other people for help.

Throughout all of this my church family has been wonderful. They have supported me in so many ways with enquiries, phone calls, cards, flowers, visits, and above all, prayers. I have felt so uplifted, loved and cared for. So, I urge you to value your church family and nurture it so that it will flourish with love for one another. Jesus said, love one another as I have loved you.'

**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.

**OUR** Baby and Toddler group continues to meet on Thursdays from 9 until 11.30 and is well supported. We have a full morning with some parents dropping in after the school run and others, including grandparents, drifting in throughout the morning.

**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, 29<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August, on the beach at the bottom of Empress Avenue from 10am to 12 noon. Our theme this year is based on the Olympics and is called "Champions". We are hoping for fine weather! In the event of rain, we are based in the Churches on the Island. The Methodist Church will host a craft group in the church and a games event in the hall. In April we hosted a Coffee Morning and Sale towards the costs of Beach Club and raised over £140.

**OUR** Church Anniversary will take place on the weekend of 20/21<sup>st</sup> July. On the Saturday night we will be hosting our local Jazz Group "Serendipity" from 7 till 9pm. We all had some fun at the last concert "Christmas with a Difference" when we sang along to a jazz version of Christmas carols! Everyone is welcome, so book the date and come and join us.

## **from Castle:**

**IT** is always a great joy to us at Castle when the young people of our Junior Church play an active part in our morning worship. Each Sunday throughout Lent they started our worship by bringing forward our Lenten symbol and reading the appropriate meditation. I believe they appreciated this opportunity as much as we did.

**FOLLOWING** our Soup and Snack lunch on Maundy Thursday, we shared in a service of Holy Communion led by Rev Chris. We always find this service a fitting preparation for the events to come on Good Friday. Our congregation was swelled on Good Friday as we were joined by our friends from St Botolph's Church and other town centre visitors. Rev Chris led us in a thought-provoking service of hymns, readings and meditations. Coffee, hot cross buns and fellowship were appreciated by all in the church lounge after the service.

As part of our Easter Sunday celebrations, every member of our congregation who was able brought forward a flower to decorate our Easter Cross. It looked magnificent and we placed it in the window overlooking the park at the close of the service. Contributions to the annual Easter offering collection totalled £250 including gift aid.

**OUR** grateful thanks go to Maryan Griffiths who recently stood down as a Church Steward after six years' service. We were thrilled to welcome Jenny Spittle, who agreed to join our team of stewards.

**AS** part of Castle's Eco Church project we made a donation to Tearfund's toilet twinning project. This enabled five toilets to be provided, one each in Nepal, Tanzania, Cote D'Ivoire, Pakistan and Mozambique, a very practical way of helping poorer communities in struggling countries improve their sanitation. Tearfund have sent us certificates to display in each of our five toilets, showing those who use our building how we support the less fortunate in a very practical and life-improving way. We continue in our journey to become an Eco Church and have successfully reapplied to become a Fairtrade Place of Worship.

**THROUGHOUT** May and June, we will be holding "Open House" on Wednesday mornings, slightly different hours to "Warm Space" but the same warm and friendly welcome as always.

**WOMEN'S** Get Together lunches are now paused until 5<sup>th</sup> September. The final lunch of this session was held to support Christian Aid Week and £250 was raised. In addition, this year an e-envelope was created to enable members of the church family to make their donations for Christian Aid Week online.

**RECENTLY** Rev Chris and senior steward Chris Pratt met with Rev Chris Smith and David Poppleton from St Botolph's Church to discuss how we can enhance our work together in the future. It was a very positive meeting as they shared thoughts with each other and we are looking forward to what is to come.

## **from The Well:**

**ON** a Tuesday, we have a settled pattern of Community Pantry (twice a month) and Warm Welcome (every week) during term time and it is also the day when we meet regularly for prayer. To keep everyone aware, resumés of the prayers are made available.

**MAKE** Lunch Myland, providing hot meals during school holidays for families, continues to be held on our premises until the summer and then there will be a change. Di has stepped down from being

the cook and we have now decided to provide packed lunches during the summer, which can be taken away or eaten on the premises. Also, for two weeks, Highwoods Country Park will be the venue.

**THE** Building Project continues. We have appointed an architect who has provided initial sketch plans of various possible building configurations for us to consider and talk through with him. These discussions will have taken place by the time this article is published.

**IN** June we have planned an Afternoon Tea for everyone connected with The Well, especially for those who normally find it difficult to get to our services. We had one last year and it was a very happy occasion.

**EVERY** third Saturday in the month (apart from August and December) we have a Charity Coffee Morning for both local and national charities. These are generally well supported and members of the community come along. On 11<sup>th</sup> August we have a Myland Churches Together barbecue when we will be joining together after our Sunday morning services.

### **FROM THE CIRCUIT DIARY:**

8 <sup>th</sup> June	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at The Ark from 9am
27 <sup>th</sup> June	Circuit meeting at Castle from 7.30pm
30 <sup>th</sup> June	Circuit Summer Celebration at Layer-de-la-Haye from 4pm
13 <sup>th</sup> July	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at The Ark from 9am
10 <sup>th</sup> August	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at The Well from 9am

In addition, Circuit Bible Study takes place on many Tuesday evenings (via Zoom) throughout the year. Please ask if you would like more details.

### **Further information 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 September/October/November 2024 by 18<sup>th</sup> July via our Circuit Administrator at [colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com](mailto:colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com)

The next newsletter will be distributed at the beginning of September so please let Judith Winward have your church news by 19<sup>th</sup> August via [judith.winward@talk21.com](mailto:judith.winward@talk21.com)