

CHELMSFORD METHODIST CIRCUIT



The Work of God in Our Circuit 2024/2025

<https://www.chelmsfordcircuit.co.uk/>

BROOMFIELD METHODIST CHURCH

Sunday Services

Broomfield friends have led a number of Local Arrangement services, and it is encouraging that folk are willing to volunteer to participate in such services. The Overcomers group love to share their inspiring personal stories of faith and to lead worship with their singing, under the creative leadership of Hilary.

Taking our place in the Community

We have continued to raise the profile of Broomfield Methodist Church (BMC) in the village by participating in the annual Christmas tree festival, where our eco tree was well received, the village Flower Festival and the village fete where Messy Church had a marquee with craft activities based on the Olympics. We were delighted that Broomfield was awarded the accolade of being a toilet twinned village as BMC spread the word throughout the village, inspiring other groups to twin their toilets too. All these activities have given us the opportunity to speak to folk attending, answer their questions and spread the love of Jesus.

Eco Church

We have continued to raise the profile of Eco Church with our members and friends through our services, notice board, prayers, and church notices. Friends are continuing to bring their plastic flowerpots for recycling and tools to send to TWAM (Tools with a Mission), which will be our church charity next year. Our property managers continue to look at ways we can make our church heating and lighting more energy efficient and sourcing fair trade tea and coffee as well as greener cleaning products.

Outreach

We continue to serve Madalayne Court, our local care home, with a service once a month and a chance to meet and chat with the residents. Mark has taken Communion Services, which have been very much appreciated by residents and staff alike.

We continue to provide space for the 3B's (Broomfield Baby Bereavement Support Group) to meet and have given permission for them to refurbish and furnish a room in the church hall where families can find a safe and supportive space to share their feelings of loss and pain. The Church Hall is also used once a month on a Friday for a toddler group for the families. During Baby Loss

Awareness Week and at Christmas time families are invited to come along to our candlelit church to light their own candles and quiet music offers them the space to reflect and think about their children. The Peace Garden at the rear of the church hall is also well used by these families, another quiet space to remember and this is especially visited on difficult days such as birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day, Father's Day and at Christmas.

Messy Church continues to meet once a month and we now have around 20 families who eagerly await their invitation to register for the next service. This year we have explored the story of the man being lowered through the roof or over the balcony of the church in our case! We looked for Jesus when he went missing! We had breakfast with Jesus as well as reflecting on being salt and light and God's promises. We also celebrated Christmas and Easter, with the enthusiastic waving of palm leaves. We have a loyal congregation who come to Messy Church regularly and it's great to get to know them and welcome them to the church. Their enthusiasm is certainly infectious. In July we had a new venture with "Messy Church Goes Wild" where we took our families to the local woods and park to soak themselves in the beauty of God's creation.

Looking to the Future.

We continue to attend the meetings with our friends in Chelmsford from the other churches to explore a possible future where we can come together and share our resources more effectively.

We are looking at the possibility of developing a Messy Parents and Carers group with our Messy Church Families.

We are also looking at the possibility of setting up another Bereavement Support Group and we have been approached to host a Teenage Cancer Support Group by a friend of the church. The cosy newly refurbished room could provide a "Home" for such groups.

A new garden is in the planning stage, using the patio outside the Common room. Messy Church have made a bug hotel for the garden and were very excited as a ladybird explored the rooms in the hotel.

We have decided to adopt an Eco friendly project for our annual Church Charity. Broomfield continues to face the challenge of the aging profile of those who are willing to take on the responsibility and commitment of leadership and needs to take some difficult and challenging decisions in the very near future.

Dianne Hodgkinson

CHRISTCHURCH COGGESHALL — LEP

We were sad to say farewell to our minister, John, in November, but wish him well in his retirement. We currently have Lynsey working with us one day a week while we seek a new, part-time minister.

Christmas was busy, as always. We organised a Christmas Tree festival with Christingle-making, and our carol service included a choir who rehearses in our building. We also hosted the very popular Christmas Eve carol singing in market hill.



We ran a Christianity Explored course in the autumn and had the privilege of seeing a couple of people commit to a life following Christ. We are supporting them as they seek churches more local to where they live.

Our weekly toddler group is thriving, and we have regular attendance at our coffee morning. We have had several opportunities to pray with individuals in great need, both in our congregation and people who have never crossed our door before, or since. We continue to see God at work and pray that he will bless others through us.

Kathryn Scherer

THE CHURCH IN GREAT NOTLEY—LEP

As we reflect on 2024, we pay tribute to all those who play a part in the life of our church; through their service, their prayers, and their generous giving. The church can only flourish when we all work together to love and serve, as Jesus taught us, and it is so good to be part of the brilliant team here. Thanks in particular to all that lead groups that help our church have a presence in our local community.

This year, there have been sorrows such as the deaths of Irene Cockerton, an original member of the church, and Eileen Hainsworth. We are grateful to God for their lives. There have also been joys, such as in May when Tom was confirmed and August when Legend was baptised. Other highlights include re-establishing links with White Court School after the pandemic; deepening connections with Notley Green School including supporting in lessons; continuing ministry to the local nursing home Longmead; the fun of Wiggle Church; and a fabulous Christmas Tree Festival. We are very grateful to all our visiting ministers for their contribution, and would particularly like to extend thanks to Hans Stein (URC) and to Ellie Ake (Baptist) for their ministry to us, particularly throughout David Sebley's sabbatical.

There has been a fair amount of work behind the scenes to establish good foundations in our church. Grateful thanks to all members of our Church Council for their dedicated commitment, and in particular to Pauline for her hard work in updating and introducing policies and procedures to make sure our church governance is not only in place, but in a good place!

This year we spent time discerning our vision and strategy. We appreciate those who supported the prayer breakfasts in the summer as we reflected on the past, present and the future of the Church in Great Notley. In our services in October we considered how we might grow wholistically as a Church – not just in numbers but also in faith and the good we do in our community. As such, we expanded our vision (how we want to be described in 3 to 5 years' time) to say: "We are the Church in Great Notley, for Great Notley. We are a growing church that shows the love of Jesus in word and action so that others may come to know him as Lord and Saviour."

To help us become this church, we have developed five goals to work towards. These are

1. Focus on building up All Age Worship
2. Become a more welcoming church
3. Establish and improve links with the local community and find opportunities to serve, support and to be a blessing to them
4. Develop a discipleship pathway
5. Work towards becoming a Bronze Eco Church in 2025.

As ever, we are thankful to God who can do infinitely more than all we can ask or imagine, and we ask that we are faithful to the one who is so faithful to us.

June Frisbee

HALSTEAD METHODIST CHURCH

Since September 2024, Halstead has experienced its fair share of ups and downs. When the Reverend Mark Pengelly assumed pastoral responsibility and began attending our meetings, there was a genuine sense of optimism; we believed we could look forward and actively contribute to the Circuit. Sadly, this hope was short-lived. Upon learning that Rev Mark would be departing on 1 March 2025, all our future plans seemed to dissolve, leaving many of us feeling completely abandoned.

Although our membership numbers remained relatively stable, with three new members, and weekly life at Halstead continued as usual, it soon became apparent that God had other intentions for our church. Gradually, we welcomed new families with young children into our congregation. The arrival of these parents, eager to join us, brought unexpected vibrancy, diversity, and inclusivity, reigniting our passion for Halstead's growth.

This summer, we marked the 150th anniversary of the first service held at Halstead. Through research and delving into our archives, we compiled a history booklet, which is now available to view on the Circuit Website.

On a Saturday morning in July 2025, we held a Stewards' Meeting with Rev Sue King, Rev Asif Karam (incoming Superintendent), and Nigel and Karen Murrell from the Circuit Office. The outcome of this meeting was a renewed enthusiasm, as we recognised that Halstead is, in fact, a growing church. No longer did we feel excluded. Our new challenge was to manage this growth and attendance effectively and continue reaching out to the local community through social media and events.

We eagerly anticipate the arrival of Rev Dr Jennifer Walters on 1 September 2025, confident that her support will help us continue to surprise others and flourish within our community. Admittedly, we face pressing building repairs and limited finances for such projects, but our pride and love for our church remain undiminished.

I am deeply grateful for Rev Sue's unwavering support and guidance. Even though she is contemplating retirement, she is an integral part of our journey and our identity.

Also, we are delighted that one of our members is training to be a Worship Leader, with valuable support from Rev Asif.

Finally, I must acknowledge my fellow stewards at Halstead, whose dedication and support have been invaluable.

Helen Catley

HATFIELD PEVEREL METHODIST CHURCH

During the last year and throughout the previous year, we have had a very dedicated team, Jane, Eddie, Jeff, John & Jenny attending the Myriad Church Planting & Growth programme. This has been very fruitful and applicable to us, as a church without a building and has reminded us that we should endeavour to be a “church” where the people “are” and to find our opportunities locally, to be amongst them. Although the programme has now finished, our “team” are very enthusiastic to endeavour to fulfil the Myriad vision -----
“to shine the light of Jesus in Hatfield Peverel.”

The fact that we have settled in well to worshipping in a room in the Village hall, where we can share friendship and refreshments in the adjoining community café after our services, is a good start. The local people are beginning to recognise us and why we are there every Sunday morning and we try to be involved in as many village events as possible.

Going back to last December we were invited to sing Christmas Carols one Sunday morning in the café, with which the customers enthusiastically joined in, as did other customers in our local pub, where we had also been asked to lead Christmas singing on a December evening and ran out of carol sheets! ----

Our well established **Stitch to Enrich** group continues meeting twice a month in the community café, where friends and some church members enjoy the opportunity to learn new sewing skills or just be socially enriched having a good chat over a “cuppa” in a welcoming environment. Our numbers have increased recently because people passing through the café have seen what we do and have decided to join us.

Throughout the year, the **St2En** group usually support the charity “**Kinder Essex**” (previously known as United in Kind) by making seasonal decorations which are included in Gift Bags, given out at Easter and Christmas to local lonely people.

St 2 En has also led to more involvement in the village **Horticultural Spring and Autumn shows**. Many of us regularly enter the handicraft classes, some with significant success and considerably boosting the usual number of entries, which pleases the organizers! To help boost these numbers even further, church members have also organized **Easter and Harvest time Craft Events** on a Sunday morning, giving the attendees the chance to get to know us and make an item they could also enter into the Spring or Autumn shows. Our next Sunday morning **Harvest craft event** is planned for **September 28th**

Continuing with **Outreach** –

We had a Tent at our local **Party in the Park** in July to show we **are** active in the village and were pleased to talk to a family of 4 who were keen to find out more about our style of worship and attend our services.

Monday Lunch club at St.Andrews Junior School

Sadly Rev. Barry & Ria held their last session on June 30th before retiring. Barry started this important connection with the children about 6years ago, at first with Sandie Hull then with Ria who has always prepared tirelessly, to ensure the children understand the bible stories, enjoy acting out mini plays and achieve related craftwork to take home.

We would like to take this opportunity to Thank Barry & Ria for their dedication to this vital work, for as Ria herself once quoted, “One can never underestimate the power of God at work in the lives of children through his faithful servants”

After the school summer break we will endeavour to keep this vital work on going, even if the format has to change a little because of the redevelopment of the school building.

Meanwhile, we are very grateful to Jane Cook who has willingly applied and been accepted to become a school governor for St. Andrew’s from September, which will ensure our church keeps a very close connection with the school and it’s pupils.

Bible Study group

This fortnightly meeting continues to be well attended and inspiring led by Jeff Hosking with discussions that have been richly influenced by those who also attended the Myriad programme.

Finally we are looking forward to **19th Oct** when we **celebrate 150 years since the Opening of our Methodist Church building** in The Street in Hatfield Peverel.

Although we had to move out in 2018, and it stood empty for a while, it has been renovated and given a new lease of life in the form of a Hindu Temple, so is still being used as a place of worship today. Our celebrations will be a testimony to the enduring faith and commitment of past Methodist congregations keeping Methodism alive in the village.

Aileen French

MOULSHAM LODGE METHODIST CHURCH

2024 – 2025 was a challenging but rewarding year for Moulsham Lodge with more now in regular attendance at services, which is where our focus has been.

The church year opened with a baptism, closely followed by the hosting of a Circuit Harvest Supper. We were delighted to join with the Brigades again for our Harvest thanksgiving service led by Clive Pickett.

Early in October the proposal of one church council/three churches was supported by our council for a trial period, but subsequently dropped as one church was undecided on the way forward. As time has now moved on and circumstances altered further consideration is required of this.

Christmas as always is busy, some highlights being, joining St Lukes to sing Carols on the parade of shops, spending time recording carols for Broomfield hospital radio, our annual carol service led by Sue Johnson and of course our Christmas morning Service led by Revd Mark Pengelly.

Just prior to Christmas we learnt that Mark and Sheridan would be leaving us in March and that Revd Asif Karam would be assuming ministerial and pastoral care for Moulsham from April. Our District Chair, -Revd David Chapman became temporary Superintendent until September when Asif takes on the role.

It was only to be expected, with the number of ministerial changes underway in the circuit, that the preaching plans for March through to September would be challenging as has been the case. This has necessitated several more united services (some of which we hosted) and local arrangements over the period but hopefully this will settle later in the year as Revd Dr Jennifer Walters joins Asif on the team, replacing Revd Barry Allen from Maldon.

January saw our Annual Church Meeting discussing some potential refurbishment of the building. To that end we have now a monthly working party tackling a range of tasks around the premises. This is a 2 hour session but we manage to achieve much in that time, there is much laughter and cake! As well as chatting to passers by. Our thanks are due to everyone involved. As a part of this we now have some new and insulated! windows, new carpeting throughout the main areas of the building, a much improved sound system and new external noticeboards.

Moving on to March we celebrated our 63rd church anniversary and were joined again by the brigades, with a service of thanksgiving led by Clive Pickett. We celebrated Easter weekend with a reflection on Good Friday afternoon led by Sue Johnson and Jim Lowe leading worship on Easter Day. Both services were well attended. Our last major service of the church year was a celebration of Pentecost led this year by Glenda Griffin. We are grateful to all our local preachers for taking such an active role in our church worship and at times stepping in when vacancies arose.

Unfortunately the planned after school club had to be abandoned because of family health pressures on its organiser. This would have provided a new influx of children but clearly was not to be. We wait to see what might come along instead.

We continue to host a range of different activities and groups, some directly connected with the church such as Friendship Club, Coffee Club, A Bible study group, Prayer group and a link with our support of the Baby basics team. Others rent our premises but we always try to ensure everyone receives a warm welcome whether known to us or less so. Our friends from the Zimbabwean church also meet on our premises at lunchtime on most Sundays.

To sum up we focus on trying to provide the best worship experience that we can and to be a welcoming church. All our events are well supported and we are now in a much stronger position following our recovery from the Covid epidemic, albeit we are all maturing, hopefully spiritually as well as physically. We give thanks for these blessings.

Bob Griffin

ST AUGUSTINE'S, NORTH SPRINGFIELD — LEP

Since June 2024, St Augustine's has been in interregnum and whilst it may sometimes feel like an anxious time, good things have been happening in our church. We are fortunate to have such dedicated church wardens and leadership team who organise events and liaise with the Methodist, URC and Anglican churches.

Church services have continued in their usual pattern, and it is a privilege to welcome visiting clergy to take Communion services. The Team at St Augustine's have also played their role by giving talks, preparing services or working together to lead worship. We have even been able to lead URC Holy Communion services as two of our congregation have been trained to do this.

At Christmas we held a Christingle service, with the Brownies and Beavers taking part, a thoughtful Blue Christmas Service, and a Crib Service, which saw young and old dressed as Nativity characters and there was even a Star present! The annual Joint Carol Service with the Roman Catholic community was also a delight, with many candles adding to the atmosphere.

At Easter, the prayerful service of the Stations of the Cross and the Maundy Thursday Communion were held and the Easter Sunday service saw a larger number of people in the church than usual. Many of our congregation joined with the Walk of Witness and the outreach in the High Street on Good Friday.

We have a good relationship with the Indian Orthodox church who are now meeting at St Augustine's, after our service, on three Sundays per month.

During this time of a vacancy, we have aimed to be more prayerful. The Interregnum Prayer is now usually said every week in church and copies are available for parishioners to use at home. Each month a new Prayer List is circulated to the congregation which is used each week in our intercessions. At Easter we held a Lent course continuing the theme from last year about How to Pray which people found helpful.

Children's work is continuing with Rainbow Tots meeting on a Friday and Team Rainbow on a Sunday, both during term time. We have a volunteer youth worker who continues to coordinate youth work with neighbouring parishes.

Our Messy Churches services at half term holidays attract a good number of children. Parents and carers have fun, learn from Bible stories and make a lot of mess, especially when it comes to the, often lavish, snack!

However, there is a slight concern that the number of children attending Sunday Worship with their parents does seem to have declined and we pray for an increase in this area.

Our outreach and social activities continue to see some growth. The Craft and Chat is thriving, and the Games Evening is gaining new members. The B&B (Bible and Beverage) continues to meet in our local pub, The Endeavour, and there have been some interesting discussions. The Springfield wombles are back in action, litter picking locally on a weekly basis, and groups of parishioners have done gardening sessions both around the church and in the vicarage garden. The Little Free Pantry is now regularly used by families and people in our community. We have been able to secure a couple of grants from the council which we have used to help buy supplies. It is lovely to have occasional thank you letters or comments from people who have used the pantry. The St Francis 'Pop Up Food Bus', from Beaulieu, now also comes every Thursday during term time and some of our parishioners help with offering refreshments and a time to chat.

There have been various fundraising activities over the year:

- ☒ Summer Fun Day and the Christmas Bazaar – which together raised over £800 and it was lovely to have the support of the Bishops School choir at Christmas.
- ☒ The Barn Dance and Harvest Supper
- ☒ Quiz Night for our Lent appeal which raised £350 for our charity Action for Family Carers.

Here are a few other things that have happened this year:

- ☐ Cristian and Val, two of our members received their certificates from Bishop Adam of Bradwell at the Cathedral for completing the Christian Studies Course.
- ☐ Cristian was accepted as an Ordinand and has started his course
- ☐ Janet hosted in September the Ride and Stride for Essex where cyclists ride to various churches to raise money to help church buildings.
- ☐ The church was given a CollectaTin from the Chelmsford Diocese. This enables people to pay by card or contactless.

We were saddened when Mark and Sheridan Pengelly moved away as both were valued preachers and friends of our community. Fond farewells were exchanged.

Finally, our church may be small, but it is full of faithful welcoming people who are willing to work as a team to ensure that we can serve God and the local community. We live in hope that the Holy Spirit is working to guide the right person to apply for the post at St Augustine's.

Jenny Murphy

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS - LEP

In October we had our usual joint Harvest service with our Anglican friends. Donations - financial and practical - were made to CHESS in Chelmsford. It was led by Revd Barry.

We were delighted to welcome Revd Jacqui King as Parish priest to the Anglican Church at her licensing service on October 14th . It has been a pleasure to work together with her as part of our Ecumenical set up here at Holy Trinity .

“Open the book” project run by a group of members in the Church is now well established in the town and regularly goes into 2 local schools. This is a wonderful outreach project to the younger members of our community.

Val Carter leads a monthly memory worship service at Windle Court and Eastham Care Homes - our local care homes. Val is an Anna Chaplain and The Anna Chaplaincy offers spiritual support to older people who are living in care homes and to their relatives and the staff who look after them. It also promotes the spiritual welfare of older people in the community particularly those facing challenges living independently in their own homes.

Monthly Creative Church with Arts and Crafts activities for local children and their parents continues on the first Saturday of the month in the local Church School hall. The numbers attending monthly are gradually increasing and those who run the group are particularly encouraged by the interaction with the parents and feel it is a wonderful outreach opportunity to spread the word of God. Those attending are repeatedly amazed that the morning is free! No charge for the activities or refreshments!

We had a joint service of Remembrance in November with our Anglican friends led by a Methodist local Preacher.

In December we were awarded an Eco Church silver award.

We had a variety of Christmas services and Advent Courses during the Christmas season.

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.

Our annual Town Carol Service was held in the church. It was lead by the new Anglican vicar Revd Jacqui King. All denominations from the town took part and some of the local schools. It was lovely to have a full church!

A Coffee morning in January raised a substantial amount of money for CHECT (Childhood Eye Cancer Trust) and included a lovely time of fellowship on a cold morning in January!

Some members of the Congregation joined in the Circuit Bible study in February.

World Day of Prayer took place on March 7th in the Evangelical church and was attended by people from all the denominations in South Woodham Ferrers. We all enjoyed fellowship and refreshments after the service.

On 9th March we held a Friendship service when we were asked to bring a friend or neighbour along. This was part of our mission strategy.

Our Lent ecumenical Bible Study was based on the lectionary readings for each of the upcoming Sundays in Lent.

Our witness on Good Friday was an open air worship and drama at the Bandstand in our town square. We felt this was an effective way to witness our Faith in the town. We also shared an hour by the Cross service in the Church led by the Anglicans.

Joint Easter Day service with our Anglican friends

We continue to support the food bank in the town This is an increasingly successful venture. Volunteers from all churches in the town, including the Methodist, help to make the project the success it has become. As well as supplying food, volunteers are there to listen and we are able to help individuals and families with emotional and spiritual support.

As a church we continue to support a range of Charities throughout the year and try to respond to the needs in the community and support local ventures. We regularly support Action for Children together with donations to Methodist Homes, Christian Aid, MMHS, MSF, All we can, Chess, Easter Offering, Alzheimers Association , DEC and LWPT. We have had a range of retiring collections for disaster funds during the year as appropriate.

We continue to show and share the love of God to each other by phoning and sending messages to each other. Flowers and cards are sent as appropriate to show that we care.

Regular activities include:

Our Anna Chaplain has begun a coffee shop drop-in at Costa Coffee SWF every Monday between 1-3pm where she is available to chat.

Weekly prayer group

Coffee after the Sunday Service

House group/bible study every fortnight.

Action for Children Collecting boxes

I would like to thank everyone who contributes to the life of the church.

Tricia Tutin

TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH

A year ago, I reported that we were eagerly awaiting the arrival in the Circuit, and as Trinity's minister, of Rev Asif Karam. He was to come as part of a Chelmsford team ministry, working alongside superintendent minister, Rev Mark Pengelly. Rev Asif duly arrived and quickly settled in, with Rev Mark taking on responsibility for the Moulsham Lodge, Broomfield and Halstead churches. Rev Asif brought with him a wealth of experience and skill, having himself been a superintendent minister in Newham. His ability to use PowerPoint presentations within the services is noteworthy!

We have continued to work closely with the other two Methodist churches in our city. Discussions about the future of the Methodist witness in Chelmsford were ongoing and a scheme was proposed whereby the three churches should begin to have one overall church council structure, with some unification of other managing groups and leadership. Having been put to a vote in the three church councils, the Trinity council felt unable to commit to the proposed structure at that time, and now further discussions will be needed.

Meanwhile, and notwithstanding, monthly united services, have taken place. These have been valued by folk from each of the three churches and are set to continue. In the autumn, an Arts and Crafts weekend, for the united churches, took place. On the Saturday, various workshops were run to the great enjoyment and satisfaction of all who participated. Where appropriate, activities from them carried over a variety of presentations to be used in the following day's united harvest service, whilst the Saturday evening united harvest supper, at Moulsham Lodge, was a great success. Three churches Saturday morning prayer walks have also continued, each one focusing on a local area within Chelmsford, and we are indebted to Malcolm Leys, from Moulsham Lodge, for leading these.

Last year, I reported on the music within our services. We have continued to welcome Gerald, to accompany our singing on the organ, and we have been delighted to receive, as a gift from him, the grand piano that his father used to own and play. It is wonderful to have this used in our services; Katie continues to enjoy accompanying us on this instrument, when work commitments permit. We value these two skilled musicians enormously. We still sing with Christian worship videos as accompaniment, when no keyboard player is available. Sadly, our worship band cannot now come together, having lost four key members.

A new initiative, promoted by Rev Asif, has been the live streaming of services, initially on Facebook and then uploaded to YouTube for later viewing. We have been very careful to set up a protocol for this, ensuring, essentially, that only happenings on the sanctuary side of the communion rail are filmed and that children are not filmed, except with prior written permission. Also, those taking communion are not filmed. The protocol, whilst very necessary, is somewhat limiting, but we are persevering and are, all the time, reviewing our procedures. The number of people viewing has been encouraging and we do aim, by these means, to provide for those who, for whatever reason, are not able to attend our services in person.

Christmastime at Trinity followed a slightly changed pattern, with a Big Sing of carols, a Christingle service, Saturday morning carol singing on three occasions (once outside, when dry, and twice in the Link corridor, when wet!). There was again an enjoyable evening singing carols in a local pub, enhanced by our good friend, Rev Heather, who came along to sing solos, and her husband, Dave, who really can swing a piano accompaniment! Christmas Day saw the usual family Christmas service.

Early in 2025, we were somewhat taken aback, having received the unexpected news that Rev Mark was to leave circuit ministry at the end of March, to take on an NHS appointment as hospital chaplain, in Bath. This meant that much future planning had to be rethought. Rev Asif agreed to take on extra responsibility, having now pastoral oversight of all three Chelmsford churches. To his great credit, Rev Asif has undertaken extra responsibilities readily, but we are aware and concerned that his burden is now considerable. We look forward, somewhat tentatively, I feel, to the situation that will exist from the beginning of September, when Rev Asif will formally become superintendent minister and Rev Dr Jennifer Walters will arrive in the Circuit to replace Rev Barry when he retires. (I say “tentatively”, as it is very apparent that the number of ministers, and of active local preachers, is less than one would wish for.) There are early, encouraging signs that we will get to know Rev Jennifer at Trinity, also some of the lesser-known local preachers from other parts of the circuit, from September onwards.

I reported last year on our Music and Drama Fellowship's *raison d'être*, and on recent and planned performances. The projected concert performances of “Chess” took place in the church hall; they were well received, if somewhat loud. (Is there such a thing as a quiet rock opera?!) Since then, in May this year, we have had a week at the Chelmsford Theatre, performing “Carousel”, again well received. The usual after-show charity collections took place, this time with fifty per cent (£300) going to Christian Aid and the rest to a domestic violence charity (this being a theme within the show). Currently, rehearsals are under way for another rock opera, “Godspell”, which will be performed in our upstairs hall in November. This begins

with John the Baptist proclaiming the arrival of Jesus into a babble of philosophies and goes on to show the work of Jesus and his disciples, in preaching and teaching, and his ultimate self-sacrifice.

Sunday Friendship Lunches, one per month, have continued, and are valued by those wishing to avail themselves. So too has Men's Supper Club (bi-monthly), and an experimental Wednesday social lunch, one per month, has run a few times and may resume after the summer break. A sadness this year has been the closure of the Trinity Link Club, or TLC, the activity providing companionship and lunch for the elderly. For many years, this has brought much valued support for the aged but a lack of volunteers and cooks, together with a great reduction in the number of those attending, has meant it is no longer viable. Many thanks go to those who, over the years, have willingly supported this activity.

The Chancellor Park Methodist Bowls Club is currently in the middle of its third season, still with members from all three Methodist Churches in the Circuit, and from none. Fellowship and competitiveness are the order of the day!

At this time of the summer break, we look forward to witnessing and worshipping with renewed impetus when it is over. Our work must continue, with new vigour and commitment!

Jeff Green

WITHAM METHODIST CHURCH

We have certainly seen God working in our Church this year while we are mindful about the challenges of the future.

The work with children and young people continues to flourish. The Saturday (twice monthly) Bible Club is thriving under the enthusiastic leadership of the Rev. 'Femi. The group enjoys Bible Stories, games and craft activities and snack time and have seen a number of new members coming from the Witham Community. Our twice monthly Sunday Club also continues to meet and enjoys sharing with the congregation at the end of the service what they have been doing. The congregation are very supportive of the group.

The folk at Witham are always very generous and the last year has been no exception. Our harvest gifts were distributed between our Foodbank, which it is our privilege to host and the House of Grace (a house for previously homeless men). We also had a large collection of items for those in Ukraine, thanks to the idea planted by Mike Fogg one Sunday.

The Coffee Pot craft group, who meet on a Friday for coffee, craft and a chat spearheaded our Samaritan's Purse Shoebox appeal before Christmas, which was very well supported, as well as making gifts, decorations and cards for the Church and congregation for Christmas, Easter and Mothering Sunday.

The Churches in Witham are working more closely together and our successful Holiday Bible Clubs are in partnership with the local parish church. It was also our privilege to host this year's World Day of Prayer which had representation from all our local Churches. We were also pleased to host the Thanksgiving service for the Week of prayer for Christian Unity.

Barry and Ria have been leading our Bible Studies. These have been a great source of teaching and have been much appreciated. We will really miss their knowledge and enthusiasm for God's word and are thankful for the work that they have done in this area of the Church's life.

Many more people have joined the Church WhatsApp group set up during Covid. This is a very convenient way of contacting folk and is also used as a platform for monthly prayer meetings. In addition, it is used as one of the ways in which the Church bi-monthly newsletters can be distributed.

We are so grateful to all in the Church who volunteer to keep God's work moving forward and we look ahead with faith and hope as we enter a new Church year.

Jenny Jarvis