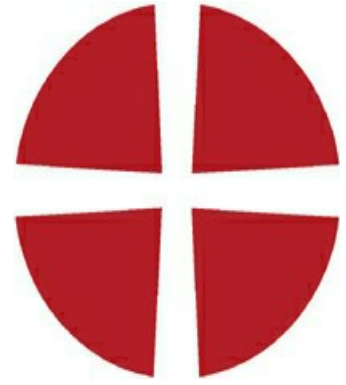
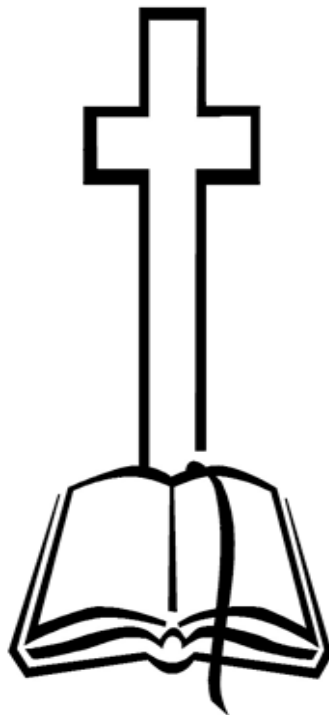


**ROMFORD
METHODIST
CIRCUIT 35/32**



**EAST
CLUSTER**

Brentwood
Rainham
South Ockendon
Upminster



**WEST
CLUSTER**

Gidea Park
Harold Wood
Havering Road
Hornchurch
Trinity

Circuit Mission Outreach Project (CMOP)

Luke 24:5b

**‘Why do you look for the living among
the dead? He is not here, but has risen’.
(NRSV)**

**NEWSLETTER AND PLAN
Mar - May 2024**

DATA PROTECTION

This newsletter contains personal information
including names and addresses.

Please ensure that it is disposed of properly or
shredded when finished with.

PLAN DATES DEADLINE - FRIDAY 5th April 2024

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE - THURSDAY 18th April 2024

Please give any information for the next newsletter
Covering Dec/Jan/Feb to Penny Masters or Peter Hobbs by
above date either by
email : pennymasters12@aol.com or phone 01708 769517
Peter - romfordcircuit.adm@gmail.com

If you have any comments or suggestions about the
newsletter and future editions please contact either
Rev Eleanor Jackson, Penny Masters or Peter Hobbs

ROMFORD CIRCUIT WEBSITE

If there is something happening in your churches.
contact the webmaster via email
robertscott44@outlook.com with the details.

He will make sure that your church information
is included on our circuit website.

visit www.romford-circuit.org.uk

Please also copy in Peter Hobbs - Circuit
Administrator romfordcircuit.adm@gmail.com

MINISTER'S MESSAGE



Dear friends,

what are you doing to mark the Lenten season? Have you given something up? Taken something on? Does its history of association with preparation and penitence still resonate with you? Or do the ideas of self-denial and self-discipline seem somewhat outdated to you? Perhaps too old-fashioned and restrictive, or conversely too contemporary, communicating the kind of commitment to eating and exercise regimes which seem to have nothing to do with Christian faith and spirituality.

Let us then, turn back to scripture, and consider what it, and Jesus have to say about the spiritual life. Tom Wright, the biblical scholar makes the point concerning the cost of discipleship, of following Jesus, that the people to whom Jesus spoke of taking up their cross and following him would not have heard it as a metaphor (Matthew 16:24-26). They would have had ample reminders in the loss of loved ones, of the cost of Roman occupation and brutality, even before the death of Jesus. My first point is that this season of Lent is not a frivolous forty days to lose weight and wait for chocolate on Easter Sunday, even if that's fun. It is a time, in a troubled world, to think about our discipleship and what it means to follow a Saviour who will go to the cross. The second point I want to draw out comes from Anita Cleverly who notes,

'Our western culture has forgotten how to lament and grieve; we are too busy, we move too fast – not just physically but in every way. We are a move-on, the-show-must-go-on culture, restlessly seeking to alleviate our pain with possessions and comfort – restlessly because these things can never deliver.'

Lent offers us the opportunity to reflect on our spiritual lives and part of that can rightly be lamenting. I'm not suggesting here revelling in our own failings, although acknowledging our mistakes before God and seeking forgiveness is part of the Christian life. I am saying it is okay to name and acknowledge before God the things which are causing us pain. Anita Cleverly goes on,

Cont.....

Minister's message cont....

'Lamenting is lots of things – it's weeping, it's gut-wrenching sobs. It's acknowledging our feelings of anger, betrayal, confusion, distress and more.'

Giving space to lamenting is giving voice to our feelings, the times when we are in turmoil before God and recognising not just our own pain, but that of the world, and of God, in the face of all that is happening in the world. Remember, scripture offers us pictures of God lamenting at human behaviour and plenty of places where lament is articulated. Therefore, there is room for us as individuals, as churches, and as a circuit to give voice to our laments; the loss of people valued in the life of the church family and circuit life; the situation in which our churches find themselves with a lack of people coming forward to take on the necessary offices and roles which enable the life of the church to function; the sense of being in a situation of decline; fear about what the future holds for ourselves and our churches; concern about what is happening in the world around us, and how to engage with it in a way which rightly reflects our Christian faith and God's love.

My final point is that neither scripture nor the Christian faith leave us in a place of despair about our commitment or lamenting. When we take the risk of turning up, of turning to God, even when what we bring is mistakes, our failure, our grief and laments, then there is always more to come. My message begins with a verse from Luke 24 when Mary comes to the garden looking for the body of her friend and teacher, to tend it, to grieve, to lament her loss. What we celebrate at Easter, what is at the heart of the Christian faith is that **Jesus has risen**, and **Jesus is alive** and **Christ will come again**. Jesus in the garden is the same and yet, different and Mary cannot cling to him, cannot have him on her terms, for what God has done in the resurrection has changed everything. And this is true for us too; we cannot cling to what has gone before, and we cannot stand still.

'...we can't have Jesus as a warm memory, a dear departed whose grave we can visit. He is alive and ahead of us, clearing a path to the Father's heart. Christian faith does not look back to a great teacher and example but forward to where Jesus leads, to that ultimate being-at-home with God that he has brought to life in the history of the world.'

We can face the cost of discipleship, we can face ourselves as we are, we can lament and grieve over what has been lost and what is happening in the world,

Superintendents message cont.....

precisely because we have hope through the cross of Jesus. We do not have to make ourselves righteous. God has restored us to relationship with him through Jesus. God has shown us, there is new life beyond all that is death-dealing, when we walk with Jesus along life's journey.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!
Alleluia!
Happy Easter, Eleanor

Books referenced: *The BRF Book of 365 Bible Reflections* Anita Cleverly p.199 'The Legacy of Lament'.

Choose Life: Christmas and Sermons in Canterbury Cathedral Rowan Williams p.111 ff

The Day the Revolution Began Tom Wright p.58

06 February 2024



The President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Gill Newton, and the Vice President, Deacon Kerry Scarlett, share their support for King Charles after the announcement of his cancer diagnosis:

"On behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain, we offer our thoughts and prayers for King Charles and his family after he was diagnosed with cancer. We appreciate his openness and willingness to share news of his health and hope that it will encourage more people to attend routine screening and health checks when invited by their GP surgery."

As we have just marked World Cancer Day, we are also praying for everyone who has just been diagnosed or is suffering from a life-changing illness, their families and everyone working for the NHS who helps and cares for patients."

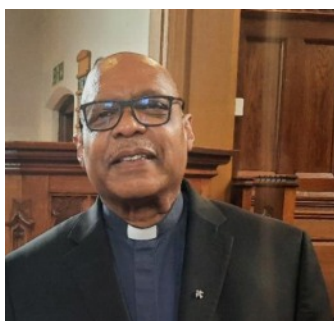
[Prayer Wall \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://methodist.org.uk)

Did you know there is a Prayer Wall on the Methodist Church in Britain website. Anyone can leave a post requesting prayer and you can visit, leave a prayer request and pray for others who are asking for prayer. Why not make it a Lenten commitment to visit once a week and support others?

Who's who in the Romford Circuit



Rev Dr Eleanor Jackson - Superintendent Minister of Romford Circuit
Presbyter West Cluster



Rev Robert Maginley - Presbyter West Cluster



Deacon Sarah Jane Rigby - CMOP



Rev Karen Bell - Presbyter East Cluster



Rev Rohama Asif - Presbyter East Cluster



Penny Masters - Pastoral Lay worker



Peter Hobbs - Circuit Administrator



Report on the work at CMOP

Clockhouse Lane RM5 3QP

Deacon Sarah Jane Rigby

Pioneer Deacon for CMOP

School

The run up to Christmas was busy with 270 children coming to CMOP to learn about Advent and Christingle. After our talk each child made their own Christingle, and went home with a booklet and chocolate angel, and a Blessing.

I am back in school on the 15th of January to help enhance their curriculum, when teaching Christianity. These three sessions will be with Y5's for 30 minutes each class, talking about the importance of Prayer in the Christian life.

Homestart

The Homestart toddler group had a Christmas Party and enjoyed a Nativity, with all the families joining in.

Sunday Sharing

We held our 3rd Sunday Sharing with the numbers increasing each time. Next one is 04th February. This includes simple food, fellowship, craft and a talk about the Christian faith, with a question-and-answer session.

Drop-In

Is continuing to meet Thursday mornings. The monthly slot when Mums Matter join us is by far the busiest. Other Thursday mornings are relatively quiet.

Family Friday

Awaiting our first family to start meeting on a Friday. This initiative for a family which are in emergency accommodation, giving them space to cook a meal, with room for the children to play. Homestart have suggested a family and I meet them w/c 22nd. Feb.

CIRCUIT STEWARDS REPORT TO THE CIRCUIT MEETING ON 17 JAN 2024

1. As promised at the last CM, we have continued our discussions with the Enfield circuit about how they manage their property. The cost of using a property manager and then employing through them a suitable company to undertake the required tasks, is quite large. We believe the only way to get an accurate estimate is to give two examples, one large church and one smaller one, with one having all tasks carried out by the company and the other only a limited amount. As Upminster provided a detailed list at the start of this debate, we will be asking them for permission to use their list to obtain an estimate. For the smaller church premises, we will seek a volunteer. Once we have the estimates we can report back. There has also been renewed suggestions from District that neighbouring circuits might work together to help out with any management problems, property, training, finance etc. and we will be pursuing this also.

2. Although there has been some progress with Thurrock Council regarding the Aveley site, we now need the charity to confirm that they are still interested on the same terms as had been previously discussed. We do not want to make any financial commitment unless there is a future use for the site which will benefit both the user and the circuit. Given the doubt over the terms under which the charity might want to have the site, we will be asking TMCP for advice. The weekly inspections continue to be made by four members of the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) as required by our insurers. The list of available items from Aveley has been circulated by Peter to all the churches and a date will be set for people to come to Aveley to view or collect items.

3. As you are all aware, Rev Karen Bell will be leaving the circuit in August 2024. We are delighted to say that Rev Rachel Read has been formally offered to the Romford Circuit as a Probationer Presbyterian to replace Karen. Although this had been expected, the stationing process must be completed as if for any new prospective Presbyterian. Accordingly, we have arranged with Rachel that she will come to the Rainham MC on Saturday 20 January to meet the CLT and a member from each of the circuit churches.

4. As part of our discussions in preparation for the staff changes, the CLT have been looking at how our team ministry might change from September 2024. After conversations in CLT this will be discussed further at the CM in March and July.

5. Although past appeals have not been successful, we do need to ask for someone to join the Circuit Stewards team. As with many things even just one more person can ease the load on the others and help us to deal with items in a shorter timescale. If anyone thinks this is something they could do but are not sure of what is entailed, please ask any member of the team.

Janice Gowlett

Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Meeting held on 19 October 2023

At the opening devotions, the chair reminded members of their calling. Rev Dr R Maginley's preaching was based on a recent Spectator magazine article looking into the model of growing churches in the UK which commented that, "Those trimming faith to fit in with culture have tended to shrink, and those offering a 'full-fat' faith, vividly supernatural, have tended to grow." He has been exploring the supernatural element in Pentecostal churches to identify the area which could be adopted for growth in our circuit.

Ministerial staff and LPs may need to take on additional services to cover the recent absence from illness and long term sickness during this and next quarters.

The circuit will be arranging another safeguarding foundation training in February/March 2024. Please inform Karen if you know anyone who needs to attend.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training was scheduled to be held in person on 11 November 2023 or 2 online sessions on 9 & 16 between 7 and 9 pm. One could also complete the training via Theology X online training platform which consists of 6 different modules. Participants will receive a certificate after completing the training.

The synod has agreed for Farmlands to cease meeting and we need to work out the practicality of doing so.

Revd Dr Andy Lyons will be leading our study day on lectionary which will take place at Harold Wood on 10 February 2024 at 9:30 for 10 am. Lunch will be bring and share.

Details and links for the advent liturgy "out of the ordinary" have been circulated to the relevant people. Advent bible study will be held during 29 November to 20 December 2023 in person at 2 pm at Trinity and 7:30-8:30 pm on Zoom.

The following three books were recommended: Prayer works by Brother Andrew with ISBN 10: 0-8007-8741-2 or 978-0-8007-8741-7, True Spirituality by Francis Schaeffer with ISBN 1972 – ISBN 0 340 14961 2 and The Wiersbe Bible Commentary by Warren W Wiersbe with ISBN 978-0-7814-4640-5.

We prayed for the desperate cry for peace of Israel-Gaza war using one of the prayers on the Methodist website.

Peter was congratulated for passing his portfolio A and is on course to complete his LP training before Rev K Bell leaving the circuit.

We agreed that Jonathan, Manasa and Peter continued to be put on trial.

Cathy Simmons

Finance Report for Circuit Meeting 17/01/24

Budget for 2024/25

- The costs relating to the ministerial team will reduce compared with the 2023/24 figures as Rev Karen will be leaving the circuit in August, and will be replaced by Rachel Reed, who will not receive a stipend.
- The District/Connexion assessment will increase significantly. The figure shown is not yet final and may be reduced. District is in the process of amending the basis of allocation of the total budget between circuits to give a higher weighting to ability to pay, which affects Romford as we had some £1.1M in unrestricted reserves at August 2022.
- The budget includes a provision for costs of the former Aveley church comprising insurance, repairs/maintenance and utility bills.
- The Gidea Park manse will however be available for letting, so the manse rental income will increase.
- There are not expected to be any major repair costs before the Gidea Park manse is let. The budget assumes an overall reduction in manse repair costs.
- There is still a significant deficit of income, and Farmlands will have closed, so an average increase in Give & Share contributions from the remaining churches of 2.5% has been assumed.

Future Projections

The budget for 2025/26 is likely to be similar to 24/25 plus inflation, as the same ministerial team will be in place.

As our reserves fall, it will become necessary to take action to balance the budget.

Budget/Projections for 2023/24

- The latest projections based on receipts and payments to 31/12/23 have been added to the 2023/24 budget sheet. Most of the circuit churches have increased their Give & Share contributions by at least the suggested 7%, and there has been an increase in manse rental and interest income compared with budget. Since December, the circuit has received the balance of funds of Farmlands church, and this has been included in the projection net of a small provision for further costs. Overall, the expenditure is projected to be similar to the budget, so there is a projected reduction in the deficit to just under £74,000 – still a high figure.

Finance report cont.....

Accounts for 2022/23

The spreadsheets and files have been passed to the auditors. Subject to audit, the accounts show the following:

- The net deficit on the general fund (ignoring transfers from other funds) amounts to £42,523
- £100,732 from the Circuit Model Trust Fund was used to repay the loan from Tower Hamlets and for other circuit purposes. £75,326 was taken to pay the annual DAF levy, and the value of the investment portfolio fell by £22,939, leaving a closing balance on the CMTF of £916,960.

Further details will be circulated in advance of the next Circuit Meeting.

District has asked for all circuit and church accounts for the year to be provided by 31 March 2024.

For any queries or to view more detailed info please contact Tom Smith

Tom Smith Circuit Treasurer

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CIRCUIT PROPERTY REPORT

1, A reminder for all Churches to submit their online property returns

2, Manse rentals

39 Greytowers Tenant continues to pay rent there are no issues.

111, Ingrave Rd has had repairs and maintenance including external rendering and internal plastering and decorating due to damp issues, garden Leylandii trees cut back Some fencing has had to be replaced due to wind damage Total costs in the region of £6000

3, CMOP - Some Toilets have been redecorated plus general maintenance

4, At this moment in time all Church QQ are up to date, but this will change over the next 2 years as discussions with Phil Robinson, as to whether he will continue to carry out this service due to possible retirement

5, Aveley Church has had roof repairs due to rainwater leaking in Sanctuary The property is still inspected weekly for insurance purposes

6, There are still vacancies for 2 additional Manse Stewards
Trevor Pugsley Circuit Property Steward



Whole Hearted 'A weekend of spiritual chaos, creativity and joy' Workshops

In July 2023 at a staff meeting information was given to us about a 'Wholehearted' conference being held in January. Who would like to go? Sarah Jane and Penny offered to go although we really didn't know what it was about other than exploring pioneer ministry and looking out of the box regarding mission.

The aims of the conference were:

To inspire one another further into Spirit-led transformation

To help one another get 'unstuck'

To make connections between people engaged in different streams of the Strategy for Evangelism and Growth, God For All

In January on a very cold Friday we set off to the Yarnfield Park conference centre at Stone in Staffordshire.

When we arrived it was very busy as there was another conference being held as well but we were welcomed and very efficiently signed in and given our room keys. The accommodation was excellent and very comfortable. After we had settled in we had the first of our very well prepared meals. Plenty of choice and lots of it. As we shared in the dining room it was lovely to meet people who had travelled from all over the country from John O Groats to Lands End literally and everywhere in between.

There were over 200 delegates over the weekend although not everyone was able to attend the whole weekend.

Sarah Jane was able to meet several Deacons and other friends for a catch-up Penny was able to meet a facebook friend for the first time and also her brother-in-law. There was no shortage of conversation this weekend. As we shared it was amazing to discover the breadth of experiences and different backgrounds that had brought people together.

Whole hearted cont.....

There were Presbyters, Superintendents, deacons, Youth workers, Layworkers CLT teams stewards, local preachers etc etc the list goes on but all people who wanted to discover how mission and church worked in perhaps a slightly different way and to share with others experiences of pioneer ministry and thinking outside the box. This includes our own CMOP as an example.

After our meal we settled down for worship which was moving and uplifting and listened to the first of several sessions over the weekend of 'PECHA KUCHA' which means story telling. We heard stories of pioneering ministry projects such as outreach centres etc but also very personal testimonies from those who had followed God's call to do something a bit different and had faced challenges along the way. We then had a talk from our keynote speaker Jaz Ampaw Farr Wow. Jaz was so inspirational and encouraging and we could have listened for much longer than we had. (check her out on Google). She was a Christian who did not go to church but had a very strong faith which had helped her through some very traumatic periods in her life including appearing on an episode of 'blind date' which comes up in 'highlights of worst dates ever' and also being fired from 'The Apprentice' but seriously she had a very powerful message which she had learnt through her childhood and teen traumas and that was the importance of belonging and finding out where you belong but not only us we need to help others find that feeling of belonging wherever they are. So much of pioneering ministry is about going out and meeting people where they are. We need to assure people that they belong and are worthy and that God loves them.

During the weekend we were invited to attend workshops and between us we were able to attend 6 different ones

1. **Church at the margins**: If poverty contradicts the will of God, what is ours to do? We heard stories of various projects around food banks and were encouraged to think about what those who used them felt and how we can improve the experience for them in a more positive way. Very thought provoking.

Cont....

Wholehearted cont.....

2. **A group conversation about burnout:** many ministerial and lay staff suffer the effects of burnout as more pressure is put on them by those around them and themselves do the detriment of their health. Some of the group shared their stories of what had happened to them and how and where they had found support and help. It was very hard to hear from those who had been called to ministry in some form but this had been curtailed due to the mental and physical toll of burnout. We need to protect our staff and be more aware of their physical, mental and spiritual needs.
3. **Creative ways of reflecting:** a workshop showing us different ways to journal and to make notes etc using symbols and memory joggers.
4. **A group conversation about discerning God, leadership, and an ever-changing landscape.** The world has changed, expressions of church and faith are changing, and culture is changing. We were told that, Leadership needs to be adaptive and agile, responding to our changing context. How we seek God amongst all this change and how we as a denomination are preparing ourselves for this change and if/do we want to adapt.
5. **Pioneering 101: People not projects.** We entered the world of our woodland eco-system and how it can tell us about creating new Christian communities. This was really engaging, in honest conversations on how people are the fore front of any pioneering scheme. How unhelpful it is to call people “projects”. Listening to those in our community and what listening to what God is doing now in our situations.
6. **Sofas not Stages: creating brave and safe spaces for real talk.** This was a workshop which explained how people want/need conversation to be listened too. We heard about the sofa that was taken the Edinburgh Fringe show in 2023 and the many people who sat down for conversation and how many were spiritual. We explored ideas and means to create safe and brave spaces in our context, and what actions might we take to intentionally embed “real talk” into our mission and ministry.

Cont.....

Wholehearted cont.....

The worship band also held a workshop on how to give Sunday a Spiritual boost which we were unable to attend.

On the Saturday afternoon we had some time free to ourselves. People suggested things they were doing and invited others to join them, some people went for a walk, read books or explored the inside of their eyelids. There was plenty of time to share with others as we met round tables and shared various activities and games that we were given.

On the Sunday morning we had a moving act of worship and following more testimonies we were sent on our way with the worship band leading us in a lovely rendition of 'The Blessing'. If you are not familiar with this I encourage you to listen to it on Youtube in one of its many versions. The words remind us that God is with us in every aspect of our lives and not only with us but also with our families and their families and will be there for generations to come. Several people were moved to tears. It was a very fitting end to a wonderful weekend which leaves us with 4 questions:

- 1 Were we glad we went? YES
2. Would we go again? YES
- 3, Would we encourage others to go? YES
4. Could the cost be a challenge? No – it was all free

Watch this space and if you are invited to come next year or want to go please take the opportunity to do so – you will not be disappointed.

Sarah Jane Rigby and Penny Masters



Study Day on the Lectionary held at HWMC **on February 10th**

This year's annual Study Day for those members of the circuit involved in preaching was led by Rev^d Dr Andy Lyons, a former colleague of Rev^d Eleanor, who proved to be quite a character. Once again it was good to welcome friends from neighbouring circuits who were able to join us.

Andy explained the differences between the lectionary in the previous Methodist Worship books that we followed and the present one, launched in 1999. We discussed what we needed to include when contemplating the Lectionary readings for any Sunday and what could be left out. We were reminded that the Gospel reading is the Word of our Lord and that this should be our focus. An open Bible should display the Gospel reading in front of the congregation during the service.

It was emphasised that we should preach on what is actually the exact content of the readings and not what we think we know. An example given was the one nature miracle included in all four gospels, the feeding of the 'five thousand'. It is easy to home-in on the little lad with the packed lunch, when in fact the boy is only mentioned in John's Gospel, which also has Jesus addressing the crowd from a mountain top, looking down on them. The wording of the other three gospels seems to imply that Jesus was looking up at the people, as he was at the lakeside, which would be lower than the surrounding land and from where the people would be looking down on him. We were encouraged to study each reading carefully, to find the links between the Old Testament readings, to think of images and also to read the before-and-after passages to get the context.

As an exercise before we left Andy encouraged everyone to walk round the church and look for aspects of the Bible on display. It gradually dawned on us that he did not mean just the symbol of our faith, the cross!

It was a very interesting and worthwhile day and many of us would have returned home determined to have a greater study of the Lectionary readings in future and possibly a different focus on our preparation for worship.

Pamela Coles & Jonathan Coles

Romford Methodist Circuit

Invite you to

COME FLY (14)

C = Circuit / Children; O = Outreach;
M = Mission & Ministries; E = Evangelism;
F = Families; L = Lunch; Y = Youth

At Rainham Methodist Church,
Wennington Road, Rainham, RM13 9DE

Saturday 9th March

9.30am to 1pm followed by lunch

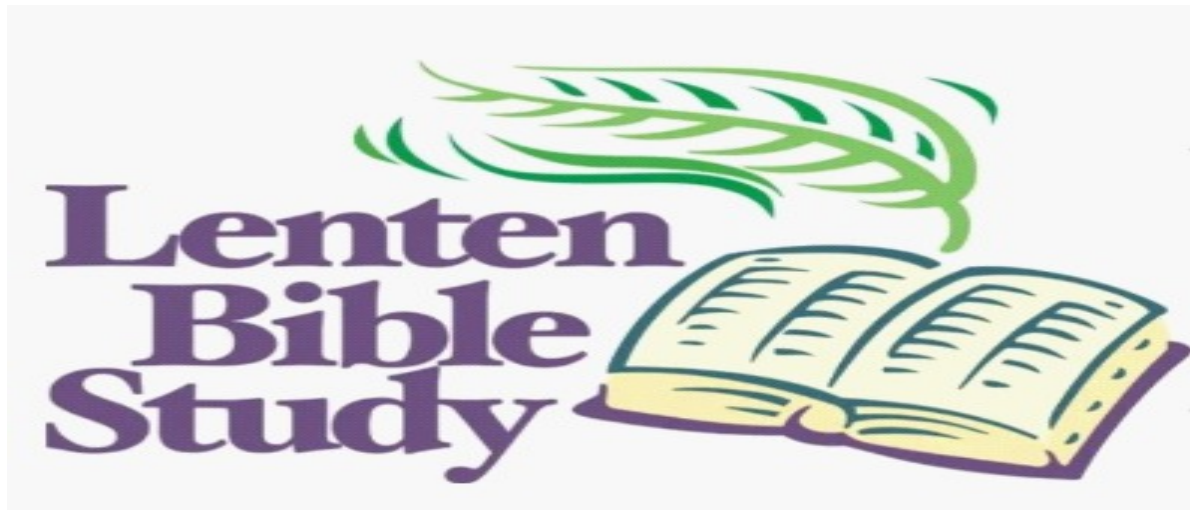
What is it? An informal get together for all people from across the circuit to meet together over Coffee, Worship, Workshops and Lunch to share, discuss, plan and then return to their churches better equipped and encouraged in order to initiate ideas with regards to mission. Please see separate flyers re workshops, timetable and registration.

For further information please contact Rev Dr Eleanor Jackson at nellie2010@virginmedia.com

or Janice Gowlett at gowletts@ntlworld.com

*But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.*





Romford Circuit Lent Study 2024

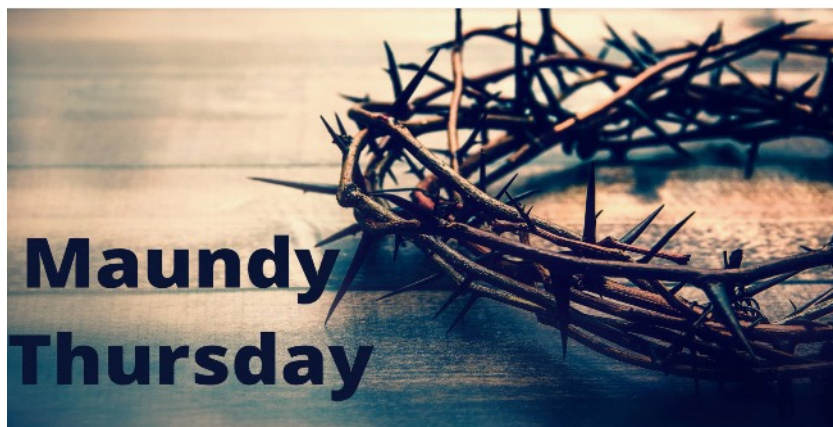
The circuit will be using
‘Let Justice Flow’
a study based on the book of **Amos**
prepared by Revd Richard Grocott

**Every Wednesday from
21st February until 20th March**

**2pm at Gidea Park Methodist Church
398 Brentwood Road, Romford, RM2 6DH.**

7.30pm on Zoom

link available from any of the circuit ministerial team or
until 10 February romfordcircuit.adm@gmail.com



Come and join with us as we
share the meaning of Maundy
Thursday

March 28th

Contemplative service

12 noon – 1.30pm CMOP

Clockhouse Lane, Collier Row RM5 3QP

Evening service 7pm

Rainham Methodist Church

Wennington Road, Rainham RM13 9DE

Services led by circuit Staff

Please come and join us as we reflect on the
events of Maundy Thursday

CHORUS AND CAKE

SATURDAY APRIL 27TH



4.30PM - 6PM

TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH,
ANGEL WAY, ROMFORD RM1 1JH

Wide, wide as the ocean...

Jesus wants me for a sunbeam..

Jesus hands were kind hands...

Trust and obey.....

Are these setting of memories?

Come and join us and share as we remember
and share those choruses that meant so
much to us as we grew up and maybe learn some
new ones or versions of familiar ones.

If you have a favourite chorus you would like us to
include please let Penny know ASAP



pennymasters12@aol.com





A Tribute to the life and faith of **GORDON PETER WALLACE**

Local Preacher in the Romford
circuit and member of
Gidea Park Methodist Church

Gordon was born in the Colchester area shortly after the second world war. He was his parents only surviving child. After the war rationing became even more stringent and, like most people born around that time, Gordon grew up disliking wastefulness. This did not mean that he was parsimonious in any way, he certainly was not. He was a most generous man with both time and money. Always ready to help others.

As a lad Gordon would get holiday jobs working in the fields in his area. Later his work was in the wood trade.

Gordon was married to Barbara. They had to wait until Barbara had finished her nursing training to get married. Sometimes Barbara and Gordon stayed out a bit too late and found the gates to the nurses home locked, so Gordon had to give Barbara a bunk-up over the wall. Eventually they were able to marry but were never blessed with children of their own, however they had a close friendship with the family of the Rev Caroline Beckett and when she and her late first husband were students they lived with Barbara and Gordon for two years. Gordon was very concerned when Caroline's husband was ill and very upset when he died.

Barabara was not a Methodist, she worshipped at All Saints Church, Ardleigh Green. Sometimes, even after her death, Gordon took Holy Communion there on Wednesday Mornings.

Cont.....

Gordon Wallace cont.....

When Gordon retired he started going to Colchester every Friday to see his friends and they would always get fish and chips for lunch, this of course had to stop during lockdown.

In 2017 Gordon became a fully accredited Local Preacher. This had probably been a long journey for he did start training once before but gave up thinking, typically that he was not good enough.

However God decided otherwise. One of Gordon's favourite verses was In St Matthew's gospel Chapter 9 verse 37 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few'. This may have been the nudge that Gordon needed. A joyful service was held at Gidea Park to celebrate his accreditation.

There were 2 things in our society that Gordon was very concerned about. One was poverty and the other was the shortage of affordable housing.

Our Gordon was a good, kind and thoroughly decent man who lived his life as our heavenly Father would have him live it. He will be greatly missed.

Gillian Olander





News from the East Cluster

Brentwood Rainham
South Ockendon Upminster

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

BRENTWOOD

At our December study day, when we meet monthly on the first Tuesday, and which is open to everyone, Denise opened the meeting, and talked about a 'Blue Christmas' and asked if we had heard the expression before? None of us had, however, we had all heard of Elvis Presley's 1975 song 'Blue Christmas when he sings that he'll have a *'Blue Christmas without you'* and *'so Blue thinking of you'*. Denise went on to explain that it is also called the Longest Night or Loneliest Day at the end of the Advent Season, usually around 21st December, the longest night of the year. Denise showed us a short clip from Methodist website.

On this day, some Churches in western Christian denominations hold a Church service that honours people who have lost loved ones and are experiencing grief. A Blue service is a simple service, a mixture of carols, and sometimes just selected verses and readings to narrate the Christmas story. There would also be some prayers which acknowledge and recognise the emptiness alongside Christians' hope which gently speaks of light in the darkness. It usually finishes the service with a Blessing.

CAROL SERVICE - We had a very enjoyable Carol service on 17th December when we invited our neighbours to join us after distributing over 300 fliers. Several 'neighbours' joined us as a result of receiving one of the fliers, and one or two have since been back at subsequent Church services. Our Carol service was lit with strings of lights and high intensity glow sticks, instead of candles that were very effective. We all enjoyed season refreshments and chat after the service.

Our numbers are staying stable at around 20-25 members on both Zoom and in person at Eagle Hall. We regularly have visitors from the URC who we have known for many years. It is always good to welcome them at our services.

To continue with our outreach programme, we are planning to hold an open air Hymns and Praise service on Sunday 2nd June, and will be using the garden, at the back of Eagle Hall, weather permitting, otherwise we will hold the service in the downstairs hall. We will be distributing some more fliers to invite our neighbours to join us.

Some feedback from our neighbours have said that they were not aware that we meet as a Church and we are looking to get a sign for outside the building.

Sue Stevens

Cont.....



Farmlands Methodist Church - Doddinghurst

On Sunday 11th February the church was filled to capacity as we celebrated and gave thanks for the life and witness of Farmlands Methodist Church. Many friends old and new came together as well as representatives from the local churches and Rev Jonghi Zihle who represented the district. Rev Roy Jackson preached a heartfelt sermon on Hope.

Below is the potted history of Farmlands which was read by Bob Scott and Chris Lindsey.

Farmlands began life almost 52 years ago as a “class meeting” of Brentwood Church when the members decided that it would be beneficial to plant a non-conformist church in Doddinghurst. Following a leaflet drop we assembled on Sunday, 3rd March 1972 in Doddinghurst Village Hall which we set out as our church - and waited. We were pleasantly surprised when people began to turn up, many with children, and Farmlands was born. The church was named Farmlands after the name of the telephone exchange which covered the local villages.

About 18 months into Farmlands’ existence, the then rector, Rev Albert Jones, invited us to use All Saints’ church and we then met here after the Anglican service. Over the years, the relationship with All Saints’ developed to mutual benefit and for many years quarterly united services were held in All Saints’. This reinforced our view that we would be better able to fulfil our purpose as a church without the diversion and cost of looking after more buildings.

At various times we have had for young people a Sunday School, a Music Group, and an Evening Youth Group (Wayfarers) who all shared in learning together and social activities. As a church we shared with Brentwood in study weekends at Culford School which formed the foundation for weekday Venture meetings mixing Bible Study, Fellowship and Social activities all being held in members’ homes where we also held our annual Church parties. For a small church we managed to produce 2 local preachers and circuit officers and members who have moved on are involved in Circuit offices elsewhere and have also successfully planted and run another new church.

Cont.....

Farmlands cont.....

We give thanks for the loyal service of so many people over the years who have served the church here and then moved on to use their talents in other churches. There are so many who have served that it would be inappropriate to mention names – with one exception – the Scott family have been here and served from beginning till the end – and we thank God for their loyal service

Farmlands never had a large congregation – probably 35 at its maximum – but contributed a huge amount to the village life over the years.

Many will remember the annual bonfire organized by Farmlands which was held on Christmas Eve outside the Village Hall where the bonfire was lit, carols were sung, (accompanied by musicians with freezing fingers) with hot chocolate and mince pies in the Village Hall after it. This began around 1980 and continued until 2012. Over the years it was extremely popular with up to 300 people attending who contributed over £8,000 to NCH/Action for Children during that time.

We supported and helped to run the Village Festival for a number of years (anyone remember the first one with the “Mummers Play on the Village Hall field?)

Another significant contribution is the Friday morning coffee morning in Priest House. This was begun by a few ladies of Farmlands, and now continues with volunteers from the village. This provides a centre for people who would otherwise have little social interaction and huge amounts have been raised for St Francis Hospice.

For very many years Farmlands have been responsible for collecting clothes from the village and taking them to the Whitechapel Mission for the homeless. This includes the famous parcels of socks and chocs which are distributed on Christmas morning. This work will still carry on in the future by volunteers from the village. We also hosted and assisted in the “*Walk of 1,000 Men*” mission from the village.

On 19th May 1991, the three Village Churches, All Saints’, St Margaret’s and Farmlands signed a Covenant to work together as Christians. The Covenant was celebrated at a service attended by the Bishop of Bradwell, the Bishop of Brentwood and the Methodist District Chairman. The “working together” was evidenced by monthly *Community Worship* held at St Margaret’s, led generally by the laity and guest speakers, and in many activities such as the Easter *Walk of Witness and* shared collections around the whole village for *Christian Aid*.

In October 2000, All Saints’ and Farmlands signed a formal Sharing Agreement. Whilst this gave Farmlands members security of tenure, it also enabled our ministers to conduct Methodist weddings and for Methodist grants to be given.

The sound and loop system in All Saints’ was the result of a gift from the Romford Circuit, which also generously supported the restoration fund for Priest House.

Farmlands’ members also gave generously to the fund for the repair to the tower.

Cont....

Farmlands cont.....

Members of Farmlands have led in Christian study which have been attended by members of the three Covenant churches. Bible Study, a prayer group, an Alpha Course and a 2 year-long study *Disciple* which was attended by around 35 people including clergy. During COVID we were able to offer Zoom services which were attended by members of the three churches and by former members who had long left the village.

Never a large membership, since returning to the building numbers dwindled further and we suffered a number of deaths among core members. Early in 2023, we began to consider the future and decided that we should cease to meet as a worshipping congregation with our last service being on 26th November last year.

Bob Scott Phil Robinson and members of Farmlands Church

When this service concludes, we shall all repair to the Village Hall for refreshments. In essence, we shall have gone full circle as we began there in March 1972.

The closing comments before we resume our worship come from a few of the clergy who have been involved in Farmlands over the years and Chris will read their contribution.

From Canon John Howden

When I became the Rector of Doddinghurst in 1986 I was astonished to find that I was to serve three congregations. Two Anglican in Doddinghurst and Mountnessing and the worshipping community known as Farmlands who shared the church building in Doddinghurst. I was, I discovered, an honorary Methodist minister working alongside the minister from Brentwood.

I had no idea what was to develop from this association. What I discovered very quickly was that the folk of Farmlands were welcoming, warm, and open to the beckoning of the Holy Spirit. There was already a partnership between the two churches. We joined together at Christmas and Easter. We shared Lent courses. Farmlands hospitality was legendary. I have a vivid memory of being invited to a party and thinking to myself 'but they don't drink'. When Sue and I arrived the first words, after greeting us, were 'Red or White'!

But it is the friendships that were formed that will always live with me. It was not long after arriving that Bob Scott and his wife Lyn made us particularly welcome.

When Lyn answered a call to be a Methodist preacher and entered the rigorous training that she was put through, I was privileged to be asked to supervise her preaching. It was a thrill to see her develop many skills in her ministry to us and we shared pulpits quite often.

Cont.....

Farmlands cont.....

Not long before I left the parish as the result of an ecumenical Lent course, we shared, once a month, an evening service of praise, prayer, drama and fun using the Roman Catholic church. It became plain that we had the beginnings of shared ministry in the village, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Anglican and a lay group of folks from all three churches started to explore the idea of a Covenant. After nearly two years we were finally granted that status. In a wonderful service in All Saints church, leaders from all three churches signed the Covenant that vowed that we would work together as much as possible and look for ways of joining the churches together more and more.

Farmlands will always be that community that allowed me to be Rector, Minister and Priest. I thank them and all the individuals who shared so generously in the work of the Holy Spirit at that time. Praise be to God!

From Rev David Dickens

I have fond memories of my time when I was a probationer minister (a late starter in my 50's!) for Brentwood and Farmlands Methodists in the 1980's. I particularly appreciated the ecumenical dimensions of the appointment. I have very special memories of the group visit to the Holy Land led by the then Anglican priest. [John Howden]. I don't expect I would clearly remember my friends from that time by name, and possibly few of them will be there, but they played an important part in developing my approach to ministry, and which helped me greatly in the two other circuits I served in.

After retiring in 2001, I returned to Braintree where I have been an active supernumerary in both Chelmsford and Colchester Circuits until about 3 years ago.

From Rev Carla Hampton , formerly a member of All Saints' and who, along with Rev Eileen Lockhart, who is here today, became a lay reader and was ordained as an Anglican priest

I am sad to hear that Farmlands is closing as my own memories of working closely with both Farmlands and St Margaret's when I was chairing the Covenant Group, were very special. Please give my best wishes to all concerned and my apologies from not being able to share in this important occasion.

As you know, sadly the live stream didn't work but Bill has now put the service onto YouTube. Below is the link and please feel free to circulate it. Either search for "Farmlands Farewell" or click on Farmlands Farewell Service (youtube.com)

We wish all the members of Farmlands best wishes and every blessing in their new journeys worshipping in other churches and thank them for hosting such a lovely, moving and appropriate event of celebration and thanksgiving.

RAINHAM

In early December the pre-school that use our premises brought about 20 young children and 4 or 5 of the parents into church so that we could share the Christmas story with them. It was lovely to see them running round the church looking for the various figures to make up the nativity scene. They had learnt the first verse of Away in a Manger which we all sang and then Clare and I taught them the first verse of Little Jesus sweetly sleep. They went out of the church smiling and holding the pictures to colour that we had printed for them. Our carol service was a little different this year as we did not have the children to act out the nativity. We did, however, have a service that involved participation by many from the congregation so people opened presents, read out carol numbers, read the passages from the bible and we had some little ones to bring the nativity figures to the front.

We were pleased to welcome people from other churches to our Sacrament service on Christmas Eve and our morning service on Christmas Day.

We are looking forward to hosting the next COMEFly on 9 March 2024.

We have yet to set a date for the Spring/Summer bazaar but we will advertise it in good time.

UPMINSTER

Christmas Tree festival: December 2023

Christmas started earlier than usual at the church, when we held a Charity Christmas card sale and coffee morning on the first Sunday in November. This proved to be very successful and gave local charities a chance to display and sell their cards and gifts.

In the first week of December the Christmas tree festival was back in the church with a magnificent display of decorated trees. The theme was "Musicals" and this provided a very colourful, and varied display. We are very grateful to all the organisations and individuals who decorated a tree.

Cont.....

Upminster cont...

As part of the event, visitors voted for their favourite tree and the winner of the Festival Cup was "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" by Hall Mead School. The other top places were "Moulin Rouge" decorated by the French group, Upminster Junior school and "Kinky Boots" by the Patchwork group. Our thanks go to the school choirs that came and sung during the week. Every day the festival stewards welcomed visitors to the church (including many friends from the Circuit) and we hope all went away knowing that the Methodist church is a caring community in the local area.

On the first Saturday a Christmas market was set up in the halls selling Christmas gifts and crafts which provided another attraction and refreshments were served throughout the day.

We closed the festival the following weekend with a Saturday night concert of Christmas songs organised by Gill Cook and featuring the Upminster Golf Club choir augmented by church members. A very enjoyable night. Throughout the year we held coffee mornings to raise funds to pay for the tree festival expenses, and we are very pleased that the combined festival fundraising has raised £5000 for Saint Francis Hospice. This all takes a great deal of organisation, and we are very blessed to have an many helpers who are prepared to volunteer and work on this each year.

We are having our Gift Day on the 2nd March with a coffee morning . The Gift Day money will be used for the maintenance of the Wesley Hall



News from the West Cluster

Gidea Park Harold Wood
Havering Road Hornchurch
Trinity

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

GIDEA PARK

This last quarter has been overshadowed by the sudden loss of our dear friend Gordon .We loved his kind and gentle ways ,his love of God and his following of Jesus .We miss his servant heart and each week we continue to meet and pray and seek God's face about our future. It was Gordon who worked to reinstate the prayer group after its break during covid .We celebrated his life, after a burial service, with his adopted family at the beginning of December.

We welcomed the year 2s from Squirrels Heath school into our Church for their Nativity concert and they did two performances to about two hundred parents .We gave each class a new Bible and we also gave fifty four copies of Artless theatre group's book 'The Grumpy owl and the Joy of Christmas' to our preschool children.

Following our carol service led by Rev Eleanor and the Rev Roy we shared a church Christmas lunch .

We shared our Christmas Eve Christingle with Rev Karen and the Redeemed Christian church. and they joined us on New Year's Eve too. This allowed AA to up up the church building for thirty hours over the New Year where people could just drop in and several hundred people did come during this time .

Penny Spearman

HAROLD WOOD

On Remembrance Sunday the congregation at HWMC was pleased to welcome the uniformed organisations which come to parade at our church, with Tim Banks leading our worship. It is always encouraging to see a good turnout and heartwarming that this annual remembrance still has meaning for many people, particularly as most of them will not have been around during the time of either of the World Wars.

At the end of November, we opened our premises for an early Christmas Cake and Coffee Morning. A steady turnout of people came in to enjoy a hot drink and some cake and to browse the stalls, helping to raise much needed money to boost church funds.

Cont.....

Harold Wood Cont.....

The following week the Christmas spirit really got going with a visit from the New Dimension Choir, which delivered a wonderful selection of songs and carols to help to get us into the right mood. This was followed at the start of December by a very entertaining 'Christmas Cracker' evening, when the Guildonian Players treated us to a mixture of delights, with many of us watching eagerly, trying to work out just how that man puts all those swords through the box where the delightful young lady has just hidden herself. A really fun evening!

Like other churches in our circuit, we used the Methodist Church's 'Out of the Ordinary' resources during Advent and Christmas. This was met with mixed feelings. Our New Year began with the annual Covenant Service. Our congregation numbers are not prolific but remain steady and everyone pulls together to keep worship and our church life going.

Once again, we were pleased to hold the Circuit New Year Social at the start of January. During 2024 we look forward to hosting the annual Ash Wednesday service and also the Study Day on February 10th, on the subject of the lectionary and its use, led by Rev^d Dr Andy Lyons.

Our Guildonian Players next production will be a murder mystery married with a comedy! 'Out of Sight ... Out of Murder' is a very entertaining play, with a great set of characters, who work together to solve the mystery ingeniously with romance and suspense. Come along and let them entertain you!

HAVERING ROAD

At Havering Road we continue to give thanks for blessings received. By the time you read this Dragon Theatre Company will have done this years panto production of Robin Hood, marking their first full year of performances since Covid interrupted everything.

We may also have had our second prayer day of the connexional year, Sat Feb 24th, and sadly the second anniversary of Russia invading Ukraine with no end in sight for those who suffer because of it.

Cont.....

Havering Road cont.....

It was the first anniversary of this event which kickstarted our prayer days as a visible sign to the community that people and events are not forgotten.

The February focus is 'World Affairs' and the summer one (currently planned for Saturday June 8th) will be 'Peace and Reconciliation', being on the Dday commemoration weekend.

Alongside these we will be holding our now regular outdoor Good Friday service with drinks and hot cross buns offered afterwards.

Easter Saturday SaMoCo between 10am and midday is likely to have a mini market and craft kind of event - with easter egg hunt of course - alongside it so look out for a poster nearer the time.

We continue to collect for the local foodbank and our SaMoCo donations are currently allocated for St Francis Hospice.

Kirsteen Howe

HORNCHURCH

Christmas Mission Outreach

Advent Sheep Trail.

During 2013, the members of Hornchurch Methodist Church busied themselves in knitting sheep in readiness for the Advent Sheep Trail round the shops in the High Street.

Ten years on the sheep still looking in their prime condition, were once again prepared to enter the shops in the High street for families to find during Advent.

At the beginning of November, Joan and Suzanne visited each of the fourteen shops that had previously hosted a sheep and were greeted eagerly by the shop owners and wished to take part in the trail again.

During the last week of November, Shepherd Luke (*puppet*) and his friends (Suzanne, Sarah Rigby, Shirley Maginley and Chris Pearson) on different days led five school assemblies in four of the town centre schools. Other visits included the Uniformed Organisations that meet on the church premises, and Cherubs Pre school and the toddler group.



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Hornchurch cont.....

The Sheep Trail ran from Friday, 1st December to closing on Thursday, 14th December. On Monday, 18th December, a Celebration event was held and between 3pm to 4.30pm the church, opened its doors and welcomed in 170 people of all ages who had participated in the trail round the shops. Free Refreshments were served first in the hall, before a trail led them into the Church area, where Shepherds Trevor, Bruce and Freddy and Angel Lydia greeted them and helped the children have their photo taken with Shepherd Luke, his flock of knitted sheep and baby Jesus in the manger. As the families trailed round the church each of the windowsills depicted a scene from the Nativity Story. These scenes had been created by different groups from the church. Once the families had reached the end of the trail children could exchange their trail leaflet for a goodie bag and Ninety bags were handed out plus some small, knitted sheep to young children in buggies. Much excellent feedback was received during the time of trail and on the day from both shop owners and families that participated in the trail. A big thank you is extended to everyone who took part or helped with the Sheep Trail in anyway.

Christmas Eve Christingle.

Christmas got off to a wonderful start, when on Sunday, 24th December at 4pm, many families filled the church for the annual Christmas Eve Christingle. The interactive service consisting of carols, puppets, making of Christingles, a game of pass the parcel, and prayer was led by Rev Eleanor, Suzanne, Chris Pearson with Lydia accompanying them on the keyboard. Puppet friends taking part included singing 'packages', Shepherd Luke, and Dulux his sheep dog, 'Chris Tingle' and of course the three camels performing 'We three Camels.' 'Chris Tingle' explained in an entertaining way how to make a Christingle! A big thank you to those who came and helped in the set up of the Christingle in preparation of the bags and oranges prior to the service and who served on the day.

Suzanne Pearson

TRINITY

At Trinity we again held our Christmas 'At Home' with 49 attendees and helpers. We had a really lovely time and enjoyed some great entertainment from 'The Entertainers@'. We have booked them for our Summer 'At Home' which will be held on Thursday 29th August and again for Christmas Dec 6th and also as they get booked up quickly have booked them for Christmas 2025! Watch this space.

Our nativity play took place on 10th Dec and we were delighted to be joined by members of Janet Alderton's family following her funeral the previous Friday and we included a time for lighting memorial candles as we remembered her and other friends and family we had lost.

We had a special Carol Service on 17th Dec taken by chair of district Rev Jonghi which was well attended and a lovely service.

January began well with our covenant service but unfortunately on the 21st Jan we were plunged into chaos as a burst water main in the vicinity provided us with an unwanted underchurch swimming pool and various other water deposits in the back halls etc. We are unable to worship in the sanctuary at the moment as it is not very pleasant but we are hoping to get things sorted in the near future. In the mean time we are worshipping in the back hall which gives us lots of opportunities to sit in different seats and approach worship differently. There is always something positive to take out of a challenge like this.

By the time you read this we will have held our 'Pancake party' which we hope will be a success.

As last year we are hoping to have a donkey join us for Palm Sunday which we hope will be as well received as last time.

On April 27th we will be hosting a '**Chorus and cake**' afternoon - see poster. Please come and join us for an afternoon of singing all those choruses you remember from childhood. Please give any favourites to Penny ASAP so that I can do a running order and ensure we have music and words where necessary.

Although we face several challenges and difficulties at the moment we remain a positive caring family and we will weather each storm together with God on our side

Penny Masters

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OUR CHURCHES REGULARLY?

Do you know what activities are happening regularly around your circuit churches?

Do you want to attend a prayer group, bible study?.

Do you enjoy craft work? Do you want to join others for coffee and fellowship?

Below is a basic list of what is going on. Please contact the churches direct for further information. Everyone is welcome to any of these activities whether a member of the church or not. If there are any activities missed out please let Penny Masters know and they will be added

Knit and natter/ craft groups



1st Mon of month 8pm - 'Knit wits' - **Rainham**

Mon afternoon 'Stitching group' **Upminster**

Thurs am Monthly 'Knit and natter' **Hornchurch**

Book Group

Sat am all enquiries to **Havering Road**



Bible study

2nd Tues of month - am/pm members homes **Brentwood**

Prayer Groups

Weds 9.30am Zoom **Brentwood**

Weds am (monthly) at members home **Hornchurch**

Sat 10am **Trinity**

Sat 9.30am Zoom Circuit prayers



Cont.....

What's on cont.....



Fellowship and friendship groups

Mon & Weds 10-12 midday 'Gateway' **Upminster**

Mon 8pm 'Wesley Guild' **Harold Wood**

Mon evening 7.30pm - monthly 'Men's group' **Hornchurch**

Tues am (fortnightly) 'Midway' **Hornchurch**

2nd Thurs pm 'Fresh start' varied programme **Brentwood**

Thurs 10.30am-12.30pm Thursday morning Drop in **CMOP**

Coffee morning/Lunch club

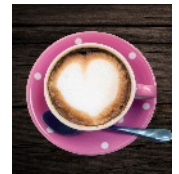
Tues 12.30pm lunch club **Harold Wood**

Thurs 10am Virtual coffee via zoom **Brentwood**

Sat 10-12 'meet up' **Hornchurch**

Sat 10-12 'SaMoCo' **Havering Road**

Sat (2nd Sat of month) 11am Brentwood theatre cafe - **Brentwood**



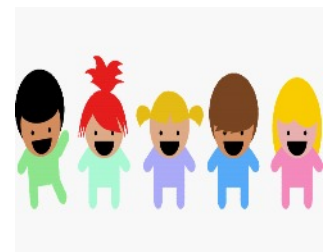
Parent/carer and toddler groups

Mon 9.45-11.45 Tots and Co - **Harold Wood**

Tues 1-2.30pm Tots play **Havering Road**

Weds 12.30 - 2pm Homestart at **CMOP**

Thurs 10-12 Tots play **Hornchurch**



A new lens on Holy Week – from Matthew's gospel

By Ricky Bull

Part 1 -

Jesus becomes the centre of Temple Worship

Who was Matthew and why did he write the gospel. Traditionally, the gospel stories (apart from Luke) were named after people that are in some way close to Jesus. Matthew and John were disciples and then apostles, Luke was a friend of Paul the Apostle, and Mark was identified both with Jesus and with Paul. These are people who were contemporaries of Jesus. Are these people the actual authors?

This is much disputed among Theologians, and on balance there are many reasons to see the traditionally identified authors as not the real or actual authors, not least, that the oral tradition established through the accounts and preaching of the apostles meant that the gospel stories were widely known and well established within the church. The oral tradition is in fact just as the phrase suggests, a well-rehearsed history of the life of Jesus Christ, as told by the apostles.

The established tradition is that these named authors were writing the history of Jesus for "Posterity", recording it for future generations in the church. However, as we can see from the writings of Paul, there was a strong assumption that Jesus would return within a generation or 2 of his own death and resurrection - there was no reason to establish the history of Christ's life for posterity. A better explanation is that these narratives were established for the local church, just as pastors through the ages have written accounts of Christ's life and their own doctrine to bring understanding to their churches. This changes how we view the gospel narratives, as we begin to comprehend which parts of the oral tradition were chosen by each of the authors to explain Jesus's life to their own communities.

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Holy Week Cont.....

If we begin with the Jesus's entry into Jerusalem (21:1-9); Matthew adds something unique from the oral tradition, the quotation from Zechariah. We think of Jesus riding on the foal of the donkey as something of an ironic gesture. It isn't and it was never intended to be ironic. This symbol for the religious and Jewish people in Jerusalem was the equivalent of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a great war horse, ready for battle against the Romans - it was seen by those who knew the scriptures as a call to arms; this was the moment that the Messiah begins his reign on earth.

Matthew alters the order of events recorded by Luke. Luke is often wrong about timing, for instance, compare the account of Paul visiting Jerusalem following his vision of Jesus on the way to Damascus; this differs between Acts and Paul's own letters; or in the childhood of Jesus. Luke makes assumptions on timings that are often wrong. Matthew insists that he visits and cleanses the Temple on the same day that he enters Jerusalem on the foal of the donkey. This is significant because Jesus sees himself as the central figure of Temple life and worship. (This is underlined within Paul's letters and the Letter to the Hebrews!) What we see in this narrative in Matthew (21:10-17) is not only the displacement of the commerce within the Temple courtyards, but also this displacement leading to the direct worship of Jesus as the Messiah, the new King David.

We do not think of Jesus ministry as chaotic - we have a picture of the feeding of the 5000, and all the people sitting in groups and listening to Jesus's ministry. But an organised chaos would be a better reflection of reality. An example is Jesus's visit to Jericho, and the difficulty Zacchaeus found in meeting Jesus. And we picture only Jesus performing the miraculous during his ministry, yet Jesus sends out the 12 and then the 70 in pairs to preach and perform the miraculous. Discipleship in the New Testament was to do with emulating the Rabbi, it was active not passive.

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Holy Week Cont.....

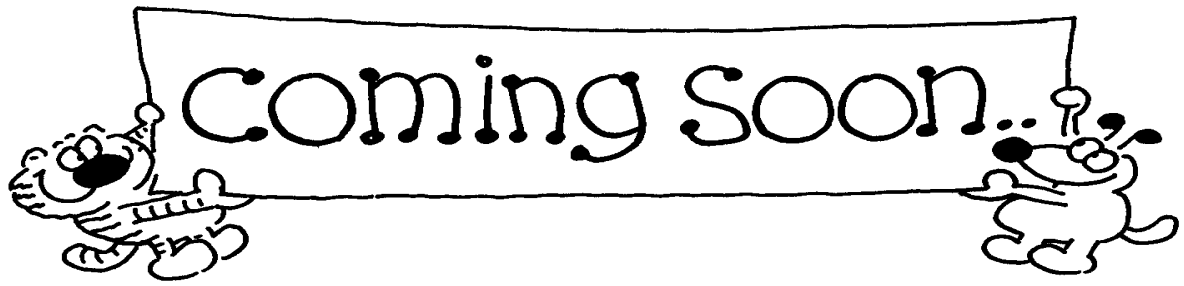
The picture we need to imagine here is not a quiet ministry in the Temple courtyard, but an active, almost chaotic ministry which includes the disciple's active participation; people being healed physically and mentally, the ministering of forgiveness and teaching; and within all this, a sense of stillness and awe in God's presence that Jesus's ministry always brings.

Then the first deputation of the Temple authorities arrives, including both Chief Priests, asking Jesus and his disciples to leave - only for this same request to be repeated on each of the subsequent days, each time questioning his authority; his authority to replace the normal life of the Temple ministry. Jesus remains in the Temple, continuing his ministry with the disciples, and the Temple Authorities depart in utter frustration that their position and authority has been usurped by Jesus.

Why does Matthew write the gospel narrative in this way. He is the pastor to a mixed Jewish and Christian community, a separate community to those involved in the Pagan activity of the Roman people. Some cling to their Jewish religious experience prior to Jesus Christ's ministry, while others accept his ministry and redemptive work for humankind. These narratives paint a picture of Jesus at the centre of Temple worship, at the centre of the Jewish religious life, fulfilling the work and worship provided in the Temple, whether healing, forgiveness, or worship - and here the worship is of Jesus himself - or simply thanksgiving to God through Jesus. This is Matthew's appeal to the whole community to find the reality of God's redemption through Jesus Christ, and for the "orthodox" Jewish community, to find in Jesus Christ, a fulfilment of the Temple Worship that they still long for and seek to restore within the Jewish diaspora across the Roman world.

Ricky Bull

Part 2 to follow in next newsletter



JUNE

Sun 2nd Sunday Sharing at CMOP

Sat 8th Day of prayer Havering Road MC

JULY

Tues 2nd Circuit Meeting 7.30pm Trinity MC

Sun 7th Circuit BBQ CMOP 4.30pm

Sun 14th Sunday sharing at CMOP

Sun 28th Farewell service for Rev Karen Bell HRMC time tbc

AUGUST

Thurs 29th 'At Home' Trinity - Details in next newsletter

SEPT

Sun 8th Welcome service for Rev Rachel Reed 4pm venue tbc

DEC

Fri 6th 'At Home' Trinity



LECTIONARY READINGS

YEAR B

RELATED

Mar 3rd

Exodus 5:1-6:1 Psalms 11;12 Phil 3:4b-14 Matt 10:16-22

Mar 10th

MOTHERING SUNDAY

Exodus 6:2-13 Psalms 13;14 Rom 5:1-11 John 12:1-8

Mar 17th

Exodus 7:8-24 Psalm 34:1-10 (11-22) Rom 5:12-21 Luke 22:1-13

Mar 24th

PALM SUNDAY

Isaiah 5:1-7 Psalm 69:1-18 Mark 12:1-12

Mar 31st

EASTER DAY

Ezekiel 37:1-14 Psalm 114;117 Luke 24:13-35

April 7th

Isaiah 26:1-9,19 Psalm 143:1-11 Luke 24:1-12

April 14th

Deut 7:7-13 Psalm 142 Rev 2:1-11 Luke 16:19-31

April 21st

Exodus 16:4-15 Psalm 81:8-16 Rev 2:12-17 John 6:30-40

April 28th

Isaiah 60:1-14 Psalm 96 Rev 3:1-13 Mark 16:9-16

May 5th

Song of Solomon 4:16-5:2;8:6-7 Psalm 45 Rev 3:14-22
Luke 22:24-30

May 12th

Isaiah 61:1-11 Psalm 147:1-11 Luke 4:14-21

May 19th

PENTECOST

Ezekiel 36:22-28 Psalm 139:1-12(13-18,23-24) Acts 2:22-38 John 20:19-23

May 26th

TRINITY SUNDAY

Ezekiel 1:4-10,22-28a Psalm 104:1-9 Rev 4:1-11 Mark 1:1-13



Please note some of our activities are on zoom
So please check with local church or circuit Office

MARCH

Wed 6th Lent Course 2pm Gidea Park MC 7.30pm zoom

Sat 9th COMEFly at Rainham MC

Wed 13th Lent Course 2pm Gidea Park MC 7.30pm zoom

Sun 17th Sunday sharing at CMOP (see in newsletter)

Tues 19th Circuit meeting 7.30pm Harold Wood MC

Wed 20th Lent Course 2pm Gidea Park MC 7.30pm zoom

Thurs 28th Maundy Thurs meditative service at CMOP -12noon
Circuit Service - Rainham 7pm

**For other Holy Week and Easter services please see
inside newsletter and circuit plan**

APRIL

Wed 3rd lent course final session 2pm Gidea Park MC
7.30pm Zoom

Thurs 18th LP/WL meeting 7.30pm Rainham

Sat 20th District representative Synod WCH

Sat 27th Chorus and cake - Trinity 4.30pm (see posters)

Sun 28th Sunday sharing at CMOP