

Southend & Leigh CIRCUIT NEWSLETTER



Spring 2022

Easter Edition

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Welcome to our Circuit

We are a group of 15 Methodist Church fellowships, including a Zimbabwean fellowship, on 17 sites in the southeast corner of Essex. Our Circuit also incorporates 'Westerley', a Christian care home.

Our churches provide traditional services alongside an increasing number of contemporary and family-friendly expressions of worship.

We have a growing sense of service and mission to our communities, with a desire to love our Lord, and our neighbours.



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www.southendandleigh.org



Message from a Circuit Steward

Dear friends,

On Easter Sunday, Christians around the world celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. However, it is important for Christians to understand that Easter Sunday is not the end of a journey – it is the beginning. This day ought to be a springboard for us to deepen our relationship with the Lord and transform our lives.

Easter is about a new life in Christ, both in this world and the next. Christians believe that Jesus, through his crucifixion, death and resurrection, redeemed us from our sins and earned for us eternal salvation. This belief, known as the redemption, is the essence of the Christian faith.

Given how central the redemption is to the Christian faith, we cannot as Christians merely recognise his resurrection on Easter and then proceed with our lives as usual. God's immeasurable act of love requires a response from us.

Thus, the resurrection is a life-changing event that filters through every day of our lives. It means that following Christ should always be our top priority and that we should seek to do his will above all else.

Now Spring is here there are signs of new life, the blossom on the trees and the flowers starting to bud. Also, as we emerge from the pandemic, and restrictions are eased, people are getting out more and catching up with family and friends in person again – it's great to see people in person and not just in a square on a screen! It is timely to reflect on the last two years and how we have coped as Churches and a Circuit. We can see how we adapted e.g. with more on-line services and increased pastoral care for those housebound, whose numbers increased as a result of the pandemic.

As with the Easter message, it is not the end of our journey, but the beginning of the next stage. So, it is also a good time to look forward. We have had a Circuit Mission Planning Day where the Circuit Leadership Team and representatives from the Churches met. Facilitated by our District Discipleship Enabler we looked at our strengths and challenges, as well as starting to dream dreams for our Churches and Circuit in the future. Now the conversation will continue in the Churches who are working through the 8 stage planning process. We have pencilled in a follow up day to then agree some priorities and a Circuit Mission plan for 'Reimagining the Southend and Leigh Circuit'.

As Christians we should not just accept the status quo or settle back to the 'old normal', we must look forward to how we can shape the Circuit for the future and the present needs of our community – for many they will emerge from the pandemic and face a cost of living crisis.

So I invite you to get involved in the process in your Churches as much as you can and share your hopes and dreams. Also pray for this process, our Circuit, our Community and that we can share the good news of Christ in Southend and Leigh, so that more people can come to know him this Eastertime.

Happy Easter to you all,

Ian Lowe (Circuit Steward)





Circuit Calendar 2022

APRIL

Sat 2nd – Circuit Prayer Breakfast, 8.30am, Zoom

Tue 5th – Minister's Staff Meeting, 12noon, Zoom

Tue 5th – CLT, 7.30pm, Zoom

Wed 6th – Worship Academy, 7pm-9.15pm, Benfleet Methodist Church

Sat 9th – District Circuit Stewards' Meeting, 10am-12noon, Hoddesdon Methodist Church

Sun 10th – Gospel Vespers 7pm for 7:30pm, The Fisherman's Chapel

Thu 14th – Maundy Thursday

Fri 15th – Good Friday

Sun 17th – Easter Sunday

Wed 27th – Wellbeing and Wholeness Service, 7.45pm, Benfleet Methodist Church

MAY

Tue 3rd – Minister's Staff Meeting, 12noon, Zoom

Tue 3rd – CLT, 7.30pm, Zoom

Wed 4th – Worship Academy, 7pm-9.15pm, Benfleet Methodist Church

Sat 7th – Circuit Prayer Breakfast, 8.30am, Zoom

Sat 7th – District Representative Spring Synod, 10am-1pm, St. Albans

Sun 8th – Gospel Vespers 7pm for 7:30pm, The Fisherman's Chapel

Wed 25th – Wellbeing and Wholeness Service, 7.45pm, Shoeburyness Methodist Church

JUNE

Sat 4th – Circuit Prayer Breakfast, 8.30am, Zoom

Tue 7th – Minister's Staff Meeting, 12noon, Zoom

Tue 7th – CLT, 7.30pm, Zoom

Wed 8th – Worship Academy, 7pm-9.15pm, Benfleet Methodist Church

Thu 9th – District Policy Committee, 7.30pm-9.30pm, Hoddesdon Methodist Church

Sun 12th – Gospel Vespers 7pm for 7:30pm, The Fisherman's Chapel

Mon 13th – Circuit Meeting, 8pm, Trinity

Wed 22nd – Wellbeing and Wholeness Service, 7.45pm

Thu 23rd-Thu 30th – Methodist Conference, Telford

JULY

Sat 2nd – Circuit Prayer Breakfast, 8.30am, Zoom

Tue 5th – Minister's Staff Meeting, 12noon, Zoom

Tue 5th – CLT, 7.30pm, Zoom

Wed 6th – Worship Academy, 7pm-9.15pm, Benfleet Methodist Church

Sun 10th – Gospel Vespers 7pm for 7:30pm, The Fisherman's Chapel

Wed 27th – Wellbeing and Wholeness Service, 7.45pm

AUGUST

Tue 2nd – Minister's Staff Meeting, 12noon, Zoom

Tue 2nd – CLT, 7.30pm, Zoom

Sat 6th – Circuit Prayer Breakfast, 8.30am, Zoom

Sun 14th – Gospel Vespers 7pm for 7:30pm, The Fisherman's Chapel



Church and Circuit News

The Experience Project - A Thank You

The last issue of the newsletter contained a list of the various charities and groups that the Experience Project helps to support with donations of food and other household products that they receive from Ocado. Two of the charities named are the One Love Project and The Shoebury Ark (shown as Friars Baptist Foodbank). The former predominantly provides help and support to the homeless and rough sleeping community in the Southend area whilst the latter provides help and support mainly to low income and needy families in and around the Shoeburyness area. Common to both is that in addition to offering foodbank and other facilities they offer free freshly cooked hot meals to any and all the guests who turn up at their doors. Without the support of EP neither of these charities could provide the levels of help that they do to their respective communities. This will, no doubt, be the case for all of the other charities and groups supported by EP and thanks needs to be given to Simon and his team at the EP for the wonderful work that they do and the invaluable outreach and support that EP gives locally and beyond. They are instrumental in making a huge difference to the lives of so many people.

A Volunteer at One love and Shoebury Ark

Prayer for Easter

When everything was dark and it seemed that the sun would never shine again, your love broke through.

Your love was too strong, too wide, too deep for death to hold.

The sparks cast by your love dance and spread and burst forth with resurrection light.

Gracious God, we praise you for the light of new life made possible through Jesus.

We praise you for the light of new life that shone on the first witnesses of resurrection.

We praise you for the light of new life that continues to shine in our hearts today.

We pray that the Easter light of life, hope and joy, will live in us each day;

and that we will be bearers of that light into the lives of others.

Amen.

This prayer has been written by the Revd Michaela Youngson



Church and Circuit News

Benfleet Methodist Church – *Hope Group*

I love being an Anna Chaplain and my work has changed since I was commissioned to include supporting the wonderful *Hope Group* at a nearby church. This group meets each Monday from 10am to 2pm including lunch. Benfleet Methodist has an extensive community involvement programme and the *Hope Group* is one such activity, which is very inclusive, friendly and so welcoming.

When the church extended their premises the Welcome Area was added at the front of the sanctuary and is sited on the main street fully visible to all walking or driving by. There are full length glass windows, a kitchen, store cupboards and a fully accessible toilet facility. Up to sixty plus people can be seated and coffee mornings take place every day. The *Hope Group* is fully integrated with the Monday coffee morning and lunch is available to all.

The *Hope Group* includes individuals living with dementia and their family carers. We have other carers and those cared for plus a recently bereaved carer making twelve carers in all. It is an opportunity to meet, chat, share refreshments and a varied programme of activities. The family carers give support to each other. During the morning we usually enjoy a Keep Fit session. All activities offered are optional and we are all “mature” individuals. The programme is regularly extended and we have enjoyed painting sessions, table tennis, flower arranging, a birds of prey demonstration, a visit from the play group which meets in a different part of the church premises and a whole host of other activities. There is a real fluidity as people pop in. One church member calls in with her dog, which folk love.

The Welcome Area is usually set up with six or eight tables and the *Hope Group* may use one or two of them with other groups involved in card making, Hug in a Shrug making, crocheting, etc. We are all invited to join in and there is an easy flow and intermingling of people. I mainly support the *Hope Group*.

Marie Howard is the leader of the Monday *Hope Group* and it is a delight for me to work with her and to share experiences and ideas.

I very much enjoy listening to individual's stories and their current involvement, eg, singing in St. Luke's Hospice choir.

After lunch we always have a Music session, again all are welcome. Bob, our musician has a wide range of instruments including a number of different guitars, banjos etc. and he sings old favourites to which we sing along (some even dance!). There is a lot of research evidence on the therapeutic effect music has on those living with dementia and certainly there is much enjoyment and participation shown.

We regularly welcome new individuals and I personally find the embedding of the *Hope Group* within the larger group an effective model.

Eileen Simmons

Anna Chaplain

eileen.kester.simmons@gmail.com



Church and Circuit News

Westerley – Pastoral Care and Support

The role of Mission Enabler for Older People is wide and varied and back in May 2019 took on a new dimension when my minister at the time, Rev Norman Hooks, asked me to consider extending the Memory Worship ministry to WLP Westerley care home.

In June 2019 I started to lead a monthly Memory Worship service on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. I was supported by one of the Memory Worship team – John Puddick – who played the piano / accordion to accompany our Westerley visits. Music and particularly old familiar hymns are such an important part of connecting with worship and John had a gift in unlocking memories through his music.

Sadly, John passed away in January 2020 and I miss his guidance in all things. In March the Coronavirus put a stop to all visitors to Westerley and indeed all care homes across the country.

With the social isolation imposed by Covid, Memory Worship “at home” uploaded to YouTube evolved to being the natural opportunity to reach Beverley; the brilliant Westerley activities coordinator and the residents she continues to support.

Every month during lockdown I would email Jayne, the Westerley Manager, with the link to Memory Worship at home service and residents watched together in the lounge. From time to time I included the Christian names of some of the residents in the opening liturgy, so that they could feel that the service spoke to them personally.

In between the endless months of lockdown I put together doorstep drops with personalised gifts to each of the Westerley residents to accompany the months service which included Palm crosses, Easter cards, Remembrance poppies and crocheted blankets with a prayer card. One gift was a personalised card offering hope for the year ahead:

‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit’ (Romans 15 v.13)

I can’t take the credit for the majority of these creative gifts. As in much of my work, somehow God puts creative people in my line of vision and facilitates the opportunity to make connections.



*John Puddick accompanying
Highlands Community
Day service*

Church and Circuit News

Sandra made these beautiful forget me not cards



June and Myra crocheted a blanket for every Westerley resident



I am delighted to say that care homes are now free to open their doors to welcome guests back. So, from September 2021 things started to return to a new normal.

My first return visit was a very emotional one; to be able to greet Westerley friends I hadn't seen for nearly two years. When I visited in October there was huge excitement as Rev Zena had just visited and everyone had been able to take communion together.

I am really happy to advise that the offers of gifts from far and wide have continued. Last month the ladies of Craft Group of the Hullbridge U3A knitted teddies to accompany the theme of Memory Worship service; God promises to be our friend.

If you are a local preacher or worship leader and could spare half an hour from 10am to lead prayers at Westerley on any day of the week please contact the Circuit Office. There is a piano in the lounge and musical accompaniment really raises the spirits of the Westerley family.

Sharing prayers with my friends at Westerley has enriched my life and I learn something new whenever I visit.

Julie Peek
Mission Enabler and Memory Worship Facilitator
Highlands Methodist Church



Nora nearly disappearing under a mountain of teddies and Maggie with her teddy bear



Circuit Events & Courses

Worship Academy 2022 Season 9

First Wednesday of the month except
January, August and September,
19:00-21:00 at Benfleet Methodist Church.

Worship Academy is a training programme particularly for leaders of worship in the Methodist Church but it is open to everyone.

Outline of the Evening:

19:00 meal

20:00 worship led by the circuit

20:15 worship academy

c.21:15 depart



You can participate both online and in-person. If you are interested in joining the mailing list for an invite please contact: southendandleighcircuit@gmail.com

Any questions please feel free to contact Worship Academy Coordinator, Sanya Strachan.

Date	Topic	Speaker/Facilitator
4 May	<i>Climate Change and the Challenge to the Church</i>	Lynne Norman / Mollie Green Agents of Change (Young Adults)
8 June (second Wed of the month)	<i>Creative Approaches to Prayer for Personal and Corporate Worship</i>	Rev Prof David Wilkinson
6 July	<i>Spontaneity and Openness to the Spirit</i>	David Clayton

**EASTER
“PRAYER & PRAISE”
CELEBRATION.**

**EASTER SUNDAY
EVENING.**

17th April 2022.

@ 6.30 P.M.

BELFAIRS METHODIST CHURCH

**(Eastwood Road North,
Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 4NG)**

**Led by the ‘Worship Band’
and others from the circuit**

**Come and share with us in the joy
of Christ’s Resurrection.**

We look forward to seeing you there.



METHODIST WOMEN IN BRITAIN WRITING COMPETITION

MWiB is holding a writing competition 2022 on the theme

"A letter to My Younger Self"

Judges will be looking for a good piece of writing written within the context of and consistent with the Christian faith without being "preachy".

The entry details are :

- The competition is open to any British Methodist woman
- It should not be published anywhere else
- 1,000 words
- An original piece of work
- Effective literary style
- Gives a good message

The three judges are :

- Georgina Clarke, writer of historical fiction Lizzie Hardwicke novels
- Judy Ford, author of Bernie Fazackerly novels
- Anne Browse, former President of MWiB

Closing date for entries - midnight on Saturday 16th April

Entries to be submitted to writing.mwib@gmail.com

There will be prizes

Winning entries will be posted to the MWiB website, and publicised through MWiB's social media platforms

The 4 E's of the Southend and Leigh Circuit

Future of God's Work in Southend and Leigh Circuit

Following the Reimagining the Southend and Leigh Circuit Mission Planning Day on Saturday 19th March, the Circuit wants churches to re-look at their direction of travel. How do we help the Kingdom of God in this circuit? To help focus the conversation the following questions were considered, known as the 4 Es:

Explore – What new work do we need to do?

Encounter – What work nationally and interdenominationally do we need to tap into and encourage circuit churches to take part in?

Equip – What work do we need to equip or stop equipping? We have huge potential with the new admin team that we are underutilising. Which bits of work are we propping up and need to stop?

Engage – We are not alone what work is being done ecumenical or across the circuit boundaries that or mission and outreach mode.

What do you want 'the' Circuit and 'your' church to be like in the future? Maybe you have already started working through the eight-step process for Mission Planning? Maybe you think the Circuit should 'do more'? Making decisions about what mission activities to support and develop across the circuit would be much easier for everyone if there was a circuit mission plan and we could all see how we fit in...

Helpful Links:

Please follow any of the attached links to see more of the Mission Planning process.

'An eight step process for Mission Planning' - with toolkit:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/lead-churches-into-growth/write-a-great-mission-plan/mission-planning-toolkit/>

The Workbook (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/18460/mission-planning-workbook.pdf>)

Strategic Guidance for the Use of Property in Mission (January 2021) states
The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. Property plays a significant role in enabling a presence within communities. ... Utilising a property, either by redeveloping it for social purpose or incorporating a range of social uses into an existing building, is as much a part of a mission plan as preaching, worship, or community evangelism.

[Click here to read the new Strategic Guidance for the Use of Property in Mission.](#)

THOUGHTS ON THE 4 E's

explore

Note where the 2 red dots are:

Exploring takes time, goes in many directions, Sometimes wanders, sometimes pauses.

As we emerge from a 2nd period of restrictions, we need to explore our own Church settings/ Spirituality afresh. How are our people feeling: frightened, sad, anxious lonely How are we feeling / how is their faith/ and ours. Noting & recording our findings in order to move on.

Encounter Asking the questions:

How have we encountered God through these times , Honestly! Be real ourselves- where/how it really is –“ I am / am not fine!”

How have our Church folk – LISTEN to them, share our story note what they are saying , 1-1 , small group

Imagine God saying ...

I don't just listen to your words. I listen to your use of words, your tone, your body movements, your eyes, your subtle facial expressions. I interpret your silences - I can hear everything you don't say in words.

If God see us like this, reflect on how others see us!

Equip We are in no place to equip others ,

if we aren't equipped ourselves! Are we being propped up or propping up others

Equipped with what: Able to...

Listen, comfort, encourage, inspire, educate, guide, teach through... prayer support, study groups, non jargon

A Lent course is an ideal time to re-engage in all 4 "E's"

Engage this occurs in many different forms:

for some it will be through food whilst for others, walks, activity, common interests, talking, being alongside, smiling, tidying up/ serving tea, on zoom .

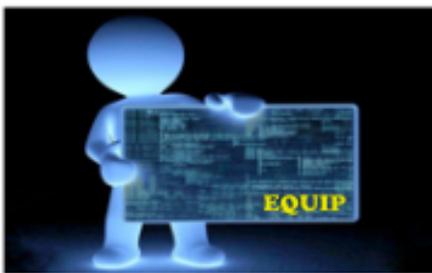
However it is done, engagement can be build up when someone trusts us enough to begin to be open/ real.

Everyone is different, some are readers, talkers, doers ,watchers, creators, makers, thinkers, repairers.

We all need to **re-engage** in our Church communities and assess where we are. Look carefully, listen properly, to the concerns and needs of our **Older /longer lived folk -** whose (war time spirit) may have seen them manage better than us with Covid restrictions and rationed items, but who desperately missed their family visiting! **Our Young Adults –** who have been Home schooling/working from home , furloughed/lost jobs, caring for Parents...

Our youngsters – who have heard their parents/school anxieties , not understanding masking up, learning from home, not allowed out, trying to imagine what this 'Covid thing is' that can't be seen.

Anne Briant Jan 2022



Engage

- keep
- hold
- grip
- retain
- keep in
- connect
- be attached to
- attach

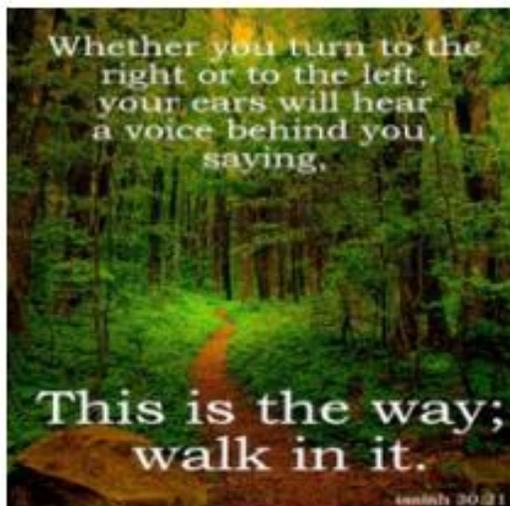


Engaging people is about meeting their needs, not yours

Tony Robbins

Once we have considered these in our own settings... then we can consider how our findings may relate Circuit wide.

Questions we all may need to answer for each of the 4 'E's' within our Settings, not just by Church Councils & Stewards.



EXPLORE

Exploring takes time.

In our own Churches:- need to reconsider...

- Asking each individual – would they like more study time, prayer time, teaching time. Anything else they'd like to see.

Across our Circuit:

- What could work as a section? – realistically with the people to run it.
- How those in the churches can see the role of the Circuit? (Some folk see only their church as relevant to them)



Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

- Proverbs 4:25-27

ENCOUNTER

Encounter

- More teaching on: Encountering God in our Churches – begun in the 6 week Methodist way series
- Including ways of experiencing Spirituality- Silence, Quiet days, Art, music, books, video, senses...



EQUIP

Equip - Spiritually, then Practically

- What do each of us need to be equipped with?
- How will that happen?
- What do our Churches need to be equipped with?
- How can this be facilitated?



ENGAGE

Engage

How does Engagement occur?

- Through feeling sure that Confidentiality is agreed and adhered to - this will allow people to be real and honest.
- Give people time and space to think ideas through and share views and ideas of their own. (people come from different angles)
- Comfortable & safe – folk need to feel secure and valued