

# Con+ac+

## The Magazine of South Essex Methodist Circuit

### Lent & Easter Edition 2025



Photo credit: Pink Crucifixion © Craigie Ronald John Aitchison 1926–2009, *Methodist Modern Art Collections*

Sharing the 'good news' that is happening  
across the circuit and in our local communities.

## A WORD FROM SUPER'S DESK...

I have a deep sigh of relief as January gives way to February; and no, it's not because it's my birthday month, or even because it brings an end to a very busy season. No, the reason for relief is because daylight hours become longer. No longer do we wake up in what feels like pitch darkness or have the day compressed into a few hours of daylight, sinking back into darkness just past 4pm. Then additionally there are other signs of light breaking in and of nature reawakening. Snowdrops pluckily making their appearance and soon bright crocus and daffodils will begin to emerge. I celebrate the light which is so life-giving!

The Bible is full of declarations and imagery that link God to light. In the story of Creation (Gen 1:3) Light is the first state to be created, 'Let there be light, and there was light...and God separated the light from the darkness'. Jesus identifies himself as 'the Light of the World'; his is 'the light that shines in the darkness and which the darkness has not overcome'.

Yet, the psalmist (Ps 139) powerfully reminds us of God of whom he says: 'the darkness will not be dark to you; for night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.'

It offers one of the many intriguing mysteries of God for our pondering and reflection: how can darkness and light be alike? Scientists offer many fascinating definitions on light and darkness, holding them as two distinct entities; and yet to God both are alike.

And therein lies comfort. There may be times we find ourselves in darkness; physical, emotional, spiritual or metaphorical and the assurance that the darkness does not conceal us from God any more than the light reveals us to Him; that HE sees us regardless is something I find tremendously comforting. In the darkness as well as in the light God journeys with us.

So may we go from strength to strength both in light and as in darkness with that confidence.

With prayer and best wishes for the journey,

***Rev Felicity***

## A PRAYER.

Gracious God, lamp to my feet, light on my path.  
Where the path before me is unclear, my perception falters,  
your purpose is obscure and your good will concealed,

Grant me  
faith to trust that what is currently concealed will,  
through your grace, one day be revealed.

Hope and confidence that you will be my companion,  
guide and confidante on the way.

Love enough to know that one day I shall gaze upon you fully,  
face-to-face.

O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who lives in eternal and perfect light,  
may your will and way be known in me and through me,  
in your community and in your world. Amen.

*(Richard Andrew/ Methodist Prayer Handbook 2023/24)*



**05/02/2025**

**Reverend David Chapman was speaking at Benfleet Worship Academy and presented Cathy Beckwith with a gift to mark her recent achievement of becoming a Worship Leader!**



## A VISIT TO THE QVSR SEAFARER'S CENTRE TILBURY



On Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February I had the opportunity to visit the QVSR Seafarer's Centre in Tilbury. The Queen Victoria Seafarer's Rest is not a charity I had heard of before coming to Thurrock, but since arriving I have heard a lot about it from my churches (Grays, Linford and Horndon-on-the-Hill Methodist Churches). All of them have supported the charity in various ways over the years – donating money, knitting hats and scarves, playing and singing at carol services, and contributing and wrapping Christmas presents for the seafarers. So, I was keen to see for myself the work they do, and what I learned was this:

Seafarers can spend up to 9 months of the year away from home, but their time in port is generally very short (often less than a day). This means shore leave can be restricted to just a few hours. Seafarers therefore like to make the most of this time. The seafarers' centres, staff and chaplains help them to do this, while also offering pastoral care and support. They provide a space for them to relax off ship and experience a little 'normalcy'. They have booths to provide privacy for phone calls with family and friends. They give them lifts to the train station so they can see the sights and buy presents to take home. They visit the ships, listening, praying, and being the hands and feet of God on board ship. And they provide support in a crisis, visiting injured seafarers in hospital, particularly when their families are unable to do so, praying with them when disaster strikes at home and they are unable to do anything to help, and providing financial support when faced with great need. This support means so much to the seafarers who receive it. I was so impressed by the



welcome and care of the chaplains and staff during my visit, and I hope it will be the first of many. Please keep the centre and its staff in your prayers.

*As near the wished for port we draw  
We lift our hearts in praise to Thee,  
Almighty Father, loving Lord,  
Our pilot on the troubled sea.*  
Charles E. York

QVSR are always looking for volunteers. If you are interested in finding out more check out their website: <https://www.qvsr.org.uk/>

*Revd Fiona Smith*

## NEWS FROM LINFORD METHODIST CHURCH

We didn't have a great many events during the Christmas period but we have reached out to our local community and made new friends.

Firstly we decided to hold our Carol Service at 4pm on the Sunday before Christmas. This brought us some new faces to our service and virtually doubled our numbers from the previous year. (This might have been from the promise of lots of seasonal food and hot chocolate-with marshmallows- after the service.)

Reverend Fiona based the service around the angels that appeared in the story of the Nativity. She used a brilliant pantomime technique, half of us being noisy and half 'shushing' in response to words in the readings. It certainly kept everyone engaged.

We also had the experience of making angels from a paper plate - this was harder than it looked! Mine was rather lopsided, like me!



The Sunday after Christmas was marked by our first joint service with St. Catherine's C of E Church of East Tilbury at the St. Francis Rooms in Linford.

This was a very enjoyable occasion, not only caused by the hot drinks, chocolate biscuits and Christmas Cake before and after the service, but also by getting to know each other.

During the service we had a break for a discussion about wanted, and unwanted, Christmas presents. Every table had a mix of congregations for this activity.

We are going to meet together every month with 5 Sundays in it. So, we are all looking forward to seeing each other again on March 23rd at Linford Church!



Our congregations have been small during the first weeks of our New Year due to illness. This wasn't only affecting the congregation, but also, on one occasion, the preacher. Fortunately, I was able to put together a service at short notice on January 26th.

My training as a Worship Leader certainly helps these sort of situations! I heard that I had qualified as a Worship Leader just before Christmas, a lovely present!

My Accreditation Service will be on Easter Sunday at 4pm. This is to enable my far flung godfamily, and those who live more locally, attend.

Other highlights include our Mothering Sunday service on March 30th. Don't forget to put your clocks forward on that day! We may well be able to provide breakfast if you haven't had time to have it before coming.

Our church continues to be the meeting place for many local community activities during the week, for example the local football team, karate, Irish dancing, sewing groups, and the local village Forum. We have been fortunate to have a new hirer - a local community choir - since the beginning of January. We hope to involve all these organisations in our 125th Church Anniversary Celebration on May 18th.

Probably our longest, and most popular affiliation, is our Toddlers' Club. This is mainly run by church members on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. They have been hard at work brightening up our Church Garden!

***Cathy Beckwith***  
***Worship Leader and Lead Steward at Linford and East Tilbury Church***

## **LANGDON HILLS CAROL SERVICE**

Our carol service this year took place on 15th December at 5.00pm.

For a number of years we have involved people who use our premises weekly in this service each year.

This service is seen by all as a service to God and not a performance.

This year our minister Rev F Al-Hassan was present to conduct prayers and to give a short interesting message to a church of over 90 people, some of whom were not regular church goers.

During the service of readings and carols - children and young people from the Wells School of Performing Arts which meet at our premises performed several dances which added to the meaning at different parts of the service. Among them "An angel comes to see Mary", "The Shepherds are told about the birth.

They and their sheep all go to Bethlehem to see the Baby" and a dance about the "Three Gifts of the Kings".

At a different time we were able to listen to their choir who sang "The Shepherds Pipe Carol - John Rutter".

Our service was appreciated by all who attended and has over the last several years become a tradition for us and each year the children and parents ask if we will continue it.

After the service people enjoyed refreshments organised by Jo Page from the School. Both occasions were enjoyed by all and gave us all more opportunities to meet and talk with the many people who use our premises weekly.



***Terry Sanger and Gill Sutton***



## LENT AND EASTER RESOURCE

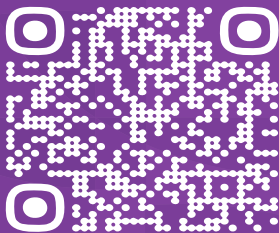
This year's Methodist Church's Lent resource is called 'Soul Food'. In the wilderness, Jesus reminded us that people don't live by bread alone. Each week during Lent, we'll reflect on what sustains us, based on the lectionary Gospel passage for Sunday. Sign-up to receive the daily reflections. There are also resources for worship during Lent. For more information visit here:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/soul-food/>



**40** daily **deliveries**  
of **spiritual nourishment**  
through **Lent**

*We do not live by bread alone*



Sign up for daily emails through  
Lent by **scanning the QR code** or  
visiting **methodist.org.uk/SoulFood**

The **Methodist** Church 

## LENT AND EASTER SERVICES AND EVENTS ACROSS THE CIRCUIT.

### Basildon

**5th March (Ash Wednesday)-**  
joint Basildon Churches  
Service at Langdon Hills,  
7.30pm. *Al-Hassan*

**17th April (Maundy Thursday)**  
joint Basildon  
Churches Service at Trinity,  
7.00pm. *Al-Hassan*

**18th April (Good Friday)-**  
joint Basildon Churches  
Service at St Paul's, 3.00pm.  
*Al-Hassan*

### Thurrock

**14th April-** Prayerful Service at  
Horndon on the Hill, 7.00pm  
*McPherson*

**18th April (Good Friday)-**  
Service at Horndon on the Hill,  
6.30pm *Allen*

**Wednesday Mornings during Lent**  
prayers via Zoom with  
Revd Fiona, 9.00am.

### Christ Church, Wickford

**Wednesday 5 March 2025 10:30 am**  
Ash Wednesday Holy Communion Service  
Led by Revd Moses Agyam

**Sunday 13 April 2025, 10:30 am**  
Palm Sunday Service  
Led by Mr Michael Wood

**Thursday, 17 April 2025, 7:30 pm**  
Maundy Thursday Communion Service  
Led by Revd Trevor Williams

**Friday, 18 April 2025, 10:00 am**  
Good Friday Ecumenical Walk of Witness  
Churches in Wickford and Runwell

**Sunday, 20 April 2025, 10:30 am**  
Easter Day Communion Service  
Led by the Revd Trevor Williams



**Billericay  
Methodist  
Church**

at Western Road & Queens Park  
*Connecting Faith and Life*

# Lent and Easter 2025 What's On



## FROM ASH WEDNESDAY TO THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

### LENT AND HOLY WEEK

Welcome to our Lent and Easter programme this year. Whether you're a regular worshipper at Billericay Methodist church, a visitor, an occasional worshipper or searching for deeper meaning in life or depth to your spirituality, we hope you will find there is a place for you in our programme of services and activities over this season.

For Christians, this is the most holy time of the year. We invite you to journey with us as we follow the story of Jesus

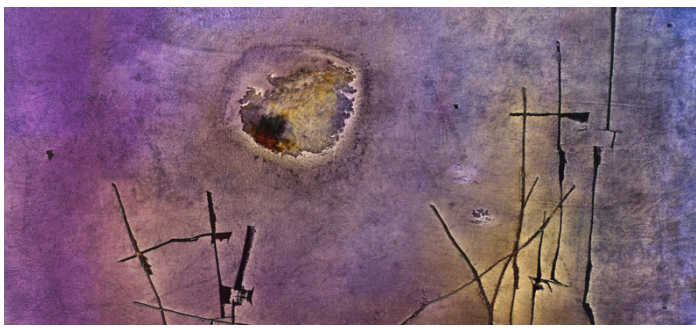
through the wilderness time of Lent and the pain of his death to the joy of his resurrection, celebrated on Easter Day and over the weeks that follow.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which falls 40 days prior to Easter. Sundays are not included in the count of these days, as each Sunday is a "little Easter," meant to celebrate resurrection.

All are welcome at any of our services and events. We hope you enjoy your time here – bring your friends and family back!

*Rev. Moses Agyam*





## The Mystery of Everything

2025 Lent Course based around the film *The Theory of Everything*.

**Thursday 13 March (for five weeks)**  
**| In-person and on Zoom**

The purpose of the season of Lent, and of this course, is as a time to deepen and broaden our faith.

This course takes the multi-award-winning film about Stephen Hawking, *The Theory of Everything*, as its starting point. The course explores ways in which the mysteries of the universe and of everyday life – and the acceptance that we have more questions than answers – can reinvigorate our faith and spiritual journey.

The titles of the five weekly sessions are:

- The experience of wonder
- The enigma of weakness (*the problem of suffering*)
- The complexity of relationship
- The encounter of frailty
- The hope beyond brokenness.

Join us for a 5-week journey through Lent as we listen, share and grow together.

You can join us in-person for face-to-face meetings at Queens Park Community Church every Thursday from 10.30am–12.00pm, and/or on Zoom from 7.30–9.00pm. Please contact Rev Moses. Email: [moses.agyam@methodist.org.uk](mailto:moses.agyam@methodist.org.uk) for more information.

**\* Please note that the first Zoom session will be on Tuesday, March 11, at 7:30 p.m. The rest of the sessions will be on Thursday.**

## Deepening Discipleship

**Monday 10 March | 7.30–9.00pm, Zoom**

### Church Book Club

The reading group meet online over Zoom to discuss and share learning.

We're currently reading Fredrick Christian Bauerschmidt excellent book, *The Love that Is God: Invitation to Christian Faith*. Our next book starting from Monday, 24 March is James H. Cone's, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, a book on African-American people's experience of lynching and how they made sense of Jesus' cross. All are welcome – please email Rev Moses: [moses.agyam@methodist.org.uk](mailto:moses.agyam@methodist.org.uk).



## The Annual Lent Lecture 2025

**'The Bible and People of Other Faiths: A Personal and Theological Journey'**

**9 March | 6:00 pm–7.30pm**

This year's lecture will be given by Dr Elizabeth Harris, honorary Senior Research Fellow within the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion, University of Birmingham, UK.



# SPECIAL SERVICES



## Ash Wednesday

Holy Communion: Lenten Identity

**Wednesday 5 March | 7:30 pm at Western Road**

Join us for our service of Holy Communion and ashing to mark the start of Lent. During the service, you will be invited to receive the sign of the cross in ash on your forehead as a symbol of penitence.

Jan van Eyck and Hubert van Eyck, *The Ghent Altarpiece: The*



*Adoration of The Mystic Lamb Detail, 1432.*

## Holy Week

Midday Meditation Services

**Monday 14 April through 17 April | Noon at Western Road**

Reflective 45 minutes services throughout the Holy week to help us reflect on the life, ministry, and death of Jesus as we look towards a promised resurrection, with carefully chosen choral music.

**Holy Monday | 14 April**

Revd Moses Agyam, the Minister.

**Holy Tuesday | 15 April**

Revd Jonathan Evens

Dean of Basildon & Team Rector of Wickford and Runwell

**Holy Wednesday | 16 April**

Mr Jim Rose

Anglican Reader in the Billericay & Little Burstead Team Ministry and chair of the Board of Trustees of the Billericay Foodbank

**Holy Thursday | 17 April**

Revd Margaret Fowler

Christ Church & Little Burstead Team Ministry

## Maundy Thursday

Holy Communion



**Thursday 17 April | 7:30 pm, at Western Road**

*\*This service begins in the church and finishes outside in front of a wooden Cross so come dress warm.*

1 Corinthians 11:23 reads, "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you." What is it we receive when we come to the table of the Last Supper and what do we do with what we have received? Who are we remembering, and why is the remembrance significant in communion? Who is Jesus for us on this night as he provides bread and wine? Is he nourisher, servant, comforter, friend, saviour, or someone else?





## Good Friday

Last Words Of Love

**Friday 18 April | 11:45 am,  
at Queens Park**

Seven last words from the Cross in Readings, Prayers, Music and Silence. All are welcome to join us for our Good Friday Service.

## Easter Day

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!



## Easter Sunrise Service

**Sunday 20 April | 6:30 am,  
at Mill Meadows**

A journey from darkness to light, from the tomb to new life. A short Easter vigil to welcome Christ's resurrection and share in the Easter joy at Mill Meadows followed by Breakfast at Western Road.

## All-Age Family Celebrations

**Sunday 20 April | 10:30 am,  
at Western Road**

Join us as we celebrate the new life of Easter including the decoration of the cross with flowers and greenery at the start of the service at outside.

## Parade & All-Age Easter Offering Service

Education for All, Hope for All

**Sunday 27 April | 10:30 am,  
at Western Road**

The Easter Offering service is produced every Easter by the Methodist Women in Britain. This year's theme is 'Education for All,



Hope for All' and focuses on the right of every person (child) to receive an education. All monies raised, including the offertory from this

service, will go to the World Mission Fund, so look out for the gift envelopes for your donations and please give generously.



Annual Lent Lecture 2025

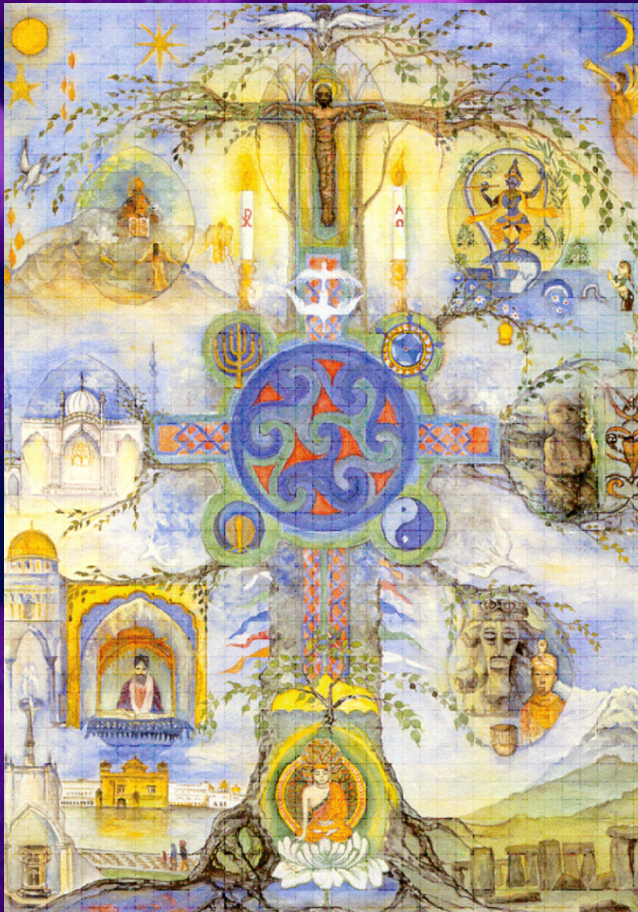
# The Bible and People of Other Faiths: A Personal and Theological Journey

With Dr Elizabeth J Harris

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>  
March

6:00 pm | Billericay Methodist Church  
at Western Road, Billericay, Essex, CM12 9DT

To RSVP, please contact Revd Moses Agyam  
E-mail: [moses.agyam@methodist.org.uk](mailto:moses.agyam@methodist.org.uk)  
Tel: 01277 623085



Picture: Inter-Faith Mandala by Gill Kelly

Elizabeth J Harris is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow within the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion, University of Birmingham, UK. Previous to this, she was an Associate Professor in Religious Studies at Liverpool Hope University. From 1996-2007, she served as Inter-Faith Relations Officer for the Methodist Church in Britain. She is a former President of the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies and a former Moderator of the Inter-Faith Theology Advisory Group within Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. She has published widely within Buddhist Studies, Buddhist-Christian Studies and Interreligious Studies. Her publications include: *Theravāda Buddhism and the British Encounter: Religious, missionary and colonial experience in nineteenth century Sri Lanka* (Routledge 2006), *Buddhism for Violent World: A Christian Reflection* (Epworth 2010 and then SCM); *Space and Conflict in Sri Lanka: colonial and postcolonial contexts* (Routledge 2018).





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The Healing of the Lunatic Boy © John Reilly (1928-2010), Methodist Modern Art Collections

## **HEALING AND WHOLENESS SERVICE:** **With Prayers of Healing, Anointing** **and the Laying-on of Hands,** **Every First Sunday of the Month at 6:30 pm at Western Road**

In John's Gospel we are told that Jesus's 'first sign' turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-11). 'Sign' is John's preferred term for miracle or healing. For John, Jesus' miracles and healings 'signify' something much deeper than the act or the result itself – they point to the healer and the miracle worker – Jesus himself, and with it, his invitation to a living relationship with him.

So, one of the gifts Jesus' brings us is the gift of healing, reconciliation and wholeness. This is why the earliest Christians often describe salvation healing in the deepest sense of the word, and the church as a spiritual hospital. This is a gift, which we so desperately need in our churches and the world today.

The Methodist Church has long seen healing and wholeness as an important aspect of God's grace and renewal. The introduction to the Healing and Wholeness Service has this to say: *'Healing was central to the ministry of Jesus. It was a sign of God's kingdom, bringing renewal and wholeness of life to those who turned to God in their need. Jesus sent out his disciples with the commission to "proclaim the*

# Con+ac+

*kingdom of God and to heal” (Luke 9:2) . . . At a service of healing, we focus on that aspect of God’s character. We bring to God our own frailty and brokenness – felt not just in physical illness, but in guilt, anxiety, and all the burdens which weigh us down. We also bring our concerns for others and for the world. Above all, we come to the God who knows our needs before we ask, and whose love revealed in Jesus Christ is stronger than suffering and death’. (Methodist Worship Book, p. 407).*

Healing, in this sense, is broader and deeper. It includes our physical body, sin, guilt and anxiety, as well as the liberation of the whole created order. This means that healing is for everyone; healing means wholeness. Every one of us is broken in some way. We may be materially rich, but inwardly, we are torn and fragmented. We need a recovery of unity and wholeness. So, in healing service, we are seeking the healing of our total selves.

We have recently began a monthly healing service at Western Road. It has takes place in the evening of every first Sunday of the month and everyone is welcome including from across the circuit. This uses the liturgy from the Methodist Worship Book, Iona and elsewhere. This is a gentle, prayerful and contemplative space to listen to God, pray for ourselves, our family, community and the world on host of concerns. We ask God for forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and wholeness.

Our expectation in these healing services is that the gift of healing is entirely the prerogative of God. God alone can set us free and lighten our burdens. We come just as we are in humility, mercy and simplicity to present our bodies and all that we carry to God and rest in his peace and love. We are called, as believers, to glorify God with our bodies. *‘Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit’,* says apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). In Romans 12 he says, *‘Offer your body as a living sacrifice to God’*. God desires to rescue and restore us to wholeness. This is what salvation, in deeper sense, means – spiritual healing.

In this service, I simply invite you to renew in your heart your sense of wonder before the mystery of your personhood. As it says in Psalm 138: *I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows right well.*

Come along and see!  
**Revd Moses Agyam.**



