SOUTHPORT METHODIST CIRCUIT

Circuit News

November 2026



Revd. Christopher Humble

Dear Friends,

We have recently held the next stage of meetings in our Listening Process following on from the events in the earlier part of the year. Seven of our churches have engaged with the facilitator Brec Seaton with a view to possible changes to our governance structures. The next stage of the process will take place on Sat 14 November 9.30am-1pm at Ainsdale when church stewards/ church wardens and church leadership teams will meet with one another. We wait to see what might emerge from that meeting in regard to new relationships being forged and the possibility of closer working arrangements.

Russell Road have decided that they can no longer sustain worship in their building, so after 13 December, at their request, they will not have a preacher sent to them. The process of ceasing to worship in the building and permission being granted to dispose of the building and related matters will require approval of the District Policy Committee (which does not meet until January) and ultimately the District Synod (which does not meet until April). In the meantime we express our thanks to Dave and Pam and all the folk at Russell Road who have served the cause there so faithfully for so long. In due course we will arrange a suitable farewell to mark the life and mission of the church at Russell Road (in consultation with the folk there) as that chapter comes to a close. As we thank those who have served at Russell Road and pray that God will be with us as you as you journey on.

I can report that the process of applying for a part-time probation has effectively come to an end. The Connexion raised so many queries and wanted us to jump through many more hoops which we did not feel able to do, so I can tell you that there will not now be a probationer coming to join us, as we had hoped.

However, in general staffing levels in regard to lay employees we have news to report- PJ Grayson has successfully completed their six month probationary period as a Circuit Children and Young People Worker with us. Congratulations PJ and thanks for all you are doing. We have also recently appointed Laura Walker as our Circuit Administrator who begins work this month in a new role working 16 hours a week largely to support me as superintendent in the work of the Circuit. So, the team of Lay Employees increases.

Like so many other circuits we are getting used to having less ordained staff than previously but more lay staff. The goal of serving God's mission is central to us all, and every single member of the circuit has a part to play in that mission.

It won't be too long before other changes happen in our staff team either. Rachel Bray will be retiring from her role as Vicar of PPW and as an Authorised Methodist Presbyter. This will add another vacancy to the growing list within the deanery of North Meols. The deanery is being asked to respond to ways of reducing how many clergy might serve the patch. It is, interestingly, not that different in terms of its challenges to the process we are embarked on in the Circuit; encouraging doing more things together, exploring new closer relationships across churches and sharing resources appears a common theme for both the Anglicans and Methodists. There is scope for a lot of imagination and creative thinking here!
As human beings we cope with change in different ways, some people find it easy but most of us don't. Yet the journey of life is full of changes, nothing stands still and, usually, if we do stand still, we find ourselves left behind. The journey of faith and discipleship is also one of discovering new dimensions all the time. Advent Sunday will be celebrated on 29th November when the Church of God will move into a new liturgical year, Year B focussing largely on Mark's gospel. We will have The Rev'd Caroline Ainger (Mission Area Lead for Liverpool Plus and a Deputy Chair of District) with us as the preacher at our Circuit Service at PPW at 11am that day. The folks who attended the Connexional Methodist Youth event "3 Gen" in Birmingham recently will also share some of their feedback from that inspiring event.

In the midst of disappointments and challenges, there are many things to be hopeful about.

With every good wish,

Christopher

The Mission of the Southport Methodist Circuit is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ by inspiring, encouraging, resourcing and enabling the people and churches of the Circuit to serve and transform their communities and the wider world.



Arnside Road Synagogue Centenary

It was my privilege to be invited to attend the Centenary celebration for the Southport Hebrew Congregation as they marked 100 years in the Arnside Road Synagogue. Security was strict given the sensitivities around ant- Semitism in recent months in the UK. But when I gave my name to the people on the gates I was permitted to enter and duly fastened my bicycle to one of the synagagoue's drainpipes! Inside the synagogue men and women were separated, men on the right, ladies on the left. This was not the first time I had seen separation of the sexes in a place of worship. One of the earliest Methodist chapels at Raithby in Lincolnshire has hat pegs down one side indicating that originally males and females were separated in some Methodist places of worship. I also once had pastoral charge of a village church outside York where the men and women came up separately to receive Holy Communion, the ladies first, then the men!

I was directed to reserved seating labelled "visiting clergy" and soon found friends from the Church of England and Roman Catholic community sat beside me. We were given a printed order of service, printed in Hebrew (with English translations) and the book was designed to read from back to front of course.

The President of the Synagogue (a lay man) welcomed us. I thought of Jairus whose daughter Jesus healed, he was the equivalent office holder in Jesus' day. Once the welcomes of Lord Lieutenant and Mayor of Sefton and the Chief Rabbi of United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, Sir Ephraim Mirvis and other guests had taken place the service began.

It was led by another lay person, the Cantor, who sang the opening prayers and some psalms. This would be exactly as it would have been when Jesus went to the synagogue. Lay people were key to the way the synagogue is organised and run. In theory this is not unlike Methodist in certain respects. There was no music apart from the human voice. It reminded me of something my cousin had told me only days before that our grandmother remembered in her youth at the end of the nineteenth century the days before there was any musical instrument in the Wesleyan chapel of her home village with the singing was led by a precentor and the choir. There was a period in that nineteenth century when organs were outlawed and cause of great controversy in Methodism after one was first installed at Brunswick in Leeds. For those who have not attended District Synods or the Methodist Conference this was how it used to be in the early years of my ministry; the precentor would strike up a note and the whole congregation would sing without any musical instrumen,ts, save perhaps a tuning fork. Indeed, I have acted as precentor on a number of occasions. Conversely I have also been the minister of chapels where the set up of the building often appeared as if the congregation gathered to worship the organ!

Then came a ceremonial opening of the ark at the front, various people processed to the front and the curtains were open, the Torah scroll was removed and paraded around the synagogue, taken up into the (pulpit?) then paraded back and replaced in the ark again. It was not unlike a procession of the blessed sacrament in some Catholic circles. There was an obvious reverence for the Scriptures.



Oddly they did not read from the scroll after all that ceremonial, as one Anglican colleague commented to me! More prayers were sung and then came the sermon (a bit like how we used to shape a service in the days of my youth with the address (sermon) at the end of the service). I used to think such a shape was borrowed from the Book of Common Prayer structure of Mattins/Evensong but perhaps it goes back earlier to our Jewish roots. The chief Rabbi's address was based around the number one hundred with reference to Psalm 100 with its theme of thanksgiving and of Abraham's age when he became the father of Isaac. He had jokes and amusing stories within the delivery as well as a serious appropriate message for the centenary. We concluded with a final prayer which the whole congregation sang with great jubilation and excitement, I was surprised that some people clapped as they sang. It reminded me of the Sankey and Moody hymns with a repeated refrain! Then we all sang the National Anthem to emphasize we were all loyal citizens.

Refreshments followed in the hall. I learned a lot about worship by attending the service. I am glad to be part of the Inter-Faith group in the town and trust we can counter prejudice and intolerance as we go about exercising our freedom to worship as we choose.

Chris Humble











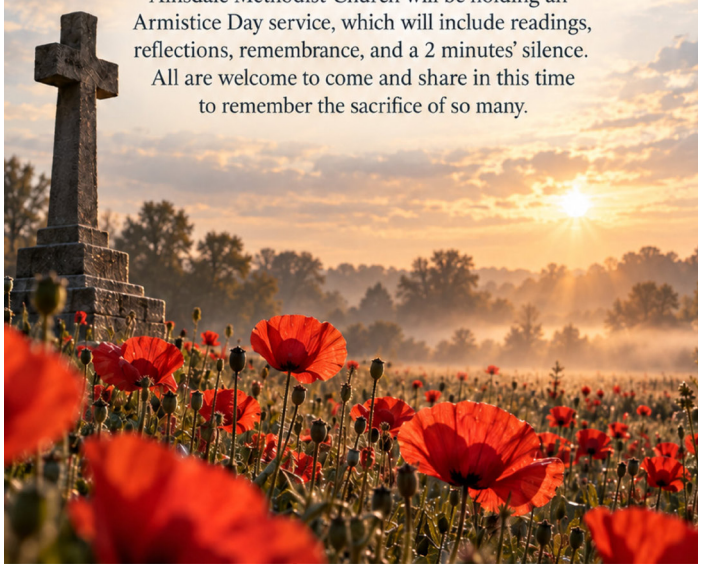
Circuit News is produced and distributed by Southport Methodist Circuit. Copy date for the August issue is **Friday 21st November** for publication on **Sunday 30thNovember.** Contributions to: admin@southportmethodist.org.uk
Please put Circuit News in the subject title.

Armistice Day Service of Remembrance

At Ainsdale Methodist Church

On Wednesday 11th November 10.30am.

Ainsdale Methodist Church will be holding an Armistice Day service, which will include readings, reflections, remembrance, and a 2 minutes' silence. All are welcome to come and share in this time to remember the sacrifice of so many.



Formby Methodist Church
Elbow Lane L37 7AF

Christmas CRAFT FAIR

Saturday
28th NOVEMBER
10.00 AM – 1.00 PM

Tombolas, White Elephant, Craft Stalls, Cakes, Christmas Cards, Raffle and more!

Your Christmas presents sorted!

Refreshments

FREE ADMISSION!

Fun for Everyone!

Good Questions Great Company

QUIZ NIGHT

SATURDAY 14TH NOVEMBER
19:30 – 22:00

£5 PER PERSON

TEAMS OF 4–5 PEOPLE

If you have not got a team please come along and we will place you in a team.

Light refreshments

Come and join in this fun evening!

Please ask Janet for further details and to book your table
07743782125

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE
TV & FILM
HISTORY
SPORT
AND MORE...

ALL PROFITS TO GO TO POTTERY PAINTING FUNDS

Quiz Friends Good Times

LIVERPOOL ROAD METHODIST CHURCH

Formby Civic Society
and
Formby Methodist Church
PRESENT

A Christmas Tapestry

Come and sing carols ♫
Hear about Christmas traditions from other lands and enjoy a
Traditional Ukrainian Christmas Nativity!

Formby Methodist Church
Elbow Lane Formby L37 4AF

Thursday 3rd December, 7.30pm

At the interval, refreshments and Christmas treats from around the world will be served.

Admission by donation at the door