



**Rev. Christopher Humble**  
Circuit Superintendent

Dear Friends,

I commend to you the video relating to the upcoming meetings designed to get you thinking about the future shapes and patterns within the Circuit. The process, begun in 2024, entitled the “Listening Events” is now reaching a critical point and some decisions will need to be made. The Circuit Leadership Team having listened to you are now offering various options by way of how we might proceed. Over recent years we have seen the number of ministerial staff reduce within the Circuit and as some colleagues have left without replacements made, so the existing staff have taken on extra responsibilities. This will happen again shortly. We will give thanks to Patrick as he sits down (please note there will be a Circuit Service at Ainsdale on Sunday 26th July at 4pm to express appreciation to Patrick for his years among us) and Ernie Grimshaw and myself look set to take on the three churches Patrick currently has pastoral charge of, unless something miraculous happens in the last stages of the stationing processes before the Methodist Conference next month (late June).

The current stage of the process is focusing on governance, in regard to the number of managing trustee bodies within the Circuit, but there are other issues to be addressed coming over the horizon. There are challenges in regard to worship patterns. We have not admitted a new local preacher for some years and need new people to take up the reins of this ministry as well as worship leading. If you feel God might be calling you to either of these ministries please speak to me or your own minister. We also recently welcomed PJ Grayson among us as the new Circuit Children & Families Worker. You will surely see PJ at a church near you in coming weeks as he meets various groups and key people in the churches. He will be commissioned at the Circuit Service on Sunday 31 May at 11am at PPW.

Please do continue to pray for the staff and circuit stewards as we wrestle with the challenges we are facing.

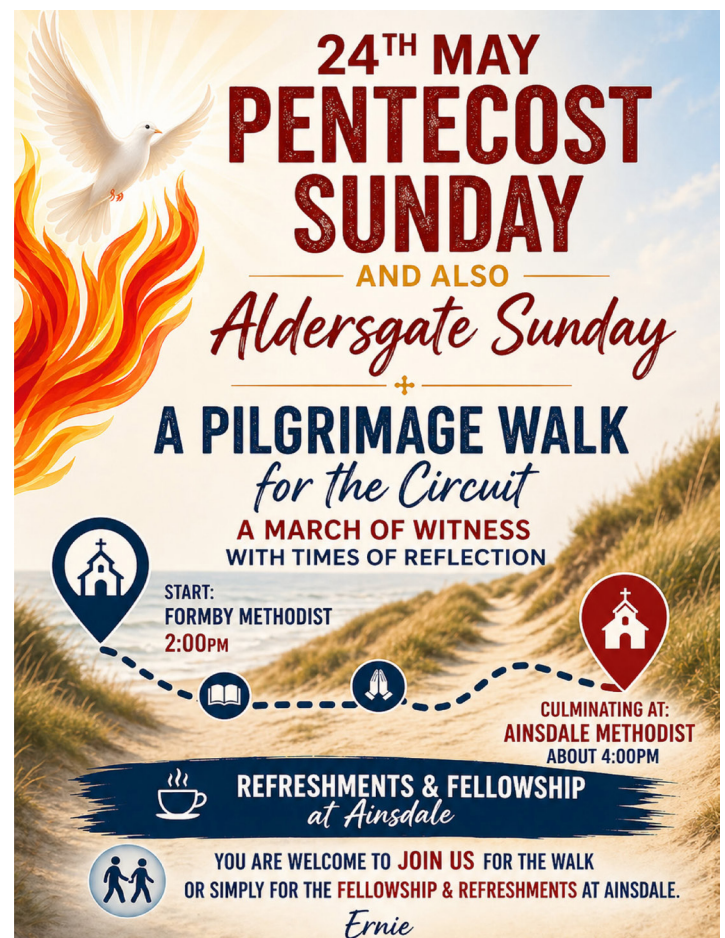
Despite the challenges we face the focus of readings from the Book of Acts during the Easter season reminds us of the small beginnings in the life of the early church, where despite difficulties and challenges, God brought

wonderful surprises to birth. His spirit is still with us and can work wonders if we are open to that spirit. My prayer is that God will continue to lead us and guide us as we move forward into the next chapter of the story.

God bless,

Chris

Watch the video.  
[southportmethodist.org.uk/listen](https://southportmethodist.org.uk/listen)

**24<sup>TH</sup> MAY  
PENTECOST  
SUNDAY**  
— AND ALSO —  
*Aldersgate Sunday*  
+  
**A PILGRIMAGE WALK  
for the Circuit**  
**A MARCH OF WITNESS  
WITH TIMES OF REFLECTION**

START:  
FORMBY METHODIST  
2:00PM

CULMINATING AT:  
AINSDALE METHODIST  
ABOUT 4:00PM

**REFRESHMENTS & FELLOWSHIP  
at Ainsdale**

YOU ARE WELCOME TO JOIN US FOR THE WALK  
OR SIMPLY FOR THE FELLOWSHIP & REFRESHMENTS AT AINSDALE.  
*Ernie*

**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.**



This photo was taken at the February interfaith lecture delivered by Archbishop John Sherrington (RC). Chris Humble (3rd left) represents the Southport Methodist Circuit at the Southport Interfaith Group, which also includes representatives of many of the town's faiths including Baha'i, several Christian denominations, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism

## The Power of Presence: How Southport's Interfaith Community is Rewriting the Narrative of Unity.

Debbie Sayers Fullwood talks with Martin Maynard

In an era where digital headlines are often dominated by division, and global conflicts frequently ripple into local tensions, a quiet but profound revolution is taking place in the seaside town of Southport. It isn't a revolution of protest or policy, but one of friendship.

I sat down with Debbie Sayers Fullwood a communication specialist for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a dedicated chair of the Southport Interfaith Group to discuss the mechanics of faith, the reality of cooperation, and how a shared cup of tea between an Imam and a Jewish representative can be a "breathtaking" act of peace.

### One Family, Many Rooms

The conversation began with a fundamental question: How do specific faith traditions teach us to engage with those who hold vastly different beliefs? For Debbie, the answer isn't found in complex theology, but in a simple, familial metaphor.

"I think every religion is peaceful and loving and believes that we're all children of God," Debbie explains. While she acknowledges the obvious theological divides, notably that not every faith shares the Christian belief in Jesus Christ, she maintains that the source of life remains a singular, unifying force. "We don't all believe in the same things, but that God ultimately is the same God. We're all one big family, and we worship our God in slightly different ways. That doesn't make us less brothers and sisters."

This "family" approach allows Debbie to navigate the often-thorny path of exclusive religious claims. Debbie remains inclusive while holding her own convictions; her response was rooted in the principle

of religious liberty. For her, the freedom to worship is a human right that transcends doctrinal differences. "Everyone should be free to worship how they see fit," she says, "and that doesn't make them less of a person than anybody else."

### Beyond Dogma: The Mission of Service

One might assume that an interfaith group is a place for vigorous debate over scripture or the nature of the afterlife. However, Debbie reveals that the Southport interfaith group has a much more practical, outward-facing focus.

Reading from the group's mission statement, she highlights their core aims: to offer hope, and to promote friendship, understanding, and cooperation among all faith communities working together for peace, social cohesion, and the well-being of the Southport area.

"We aren't trying to make everyone believe what one believes," Debbie clarifies. When asked whether the goal was to find "common ground" or "learn to disagree with love," Debbie suggested it was actually neither. In their meetings, they don't really discuss "religion" in the abstract.

"We're not contentious at all. Religion isn't particularly the discussion; it's what we can do for our community together. We're working together for the community."

By pivoting from dialogue about belief to action based on values, the group bypasses the theological traps that often derail interfaith efforts. They aren't asking "Who is right?" but rather "Who needs our help today?"

## Friendship a Shield Against Global Tensions

Perhaps the most poignant moment of the interview came when I asked how the group handles global political tensions, specifically the ongoing conflict in Gaza and Israel. In many parts of the world, such conflicts have fractured local communities, but in Southport, the bond has remained unbroken.

Debbie admits there was a moment of trepidation before their first meeting after the war began. “We may have had our heart and our mouth a little bit,” she confesses. However, the anxiety was unfounded. “Our Jewish representative and the Imam are such fantastic friends; we needn’t have worried at all. Even though they represent two areas that don’t get along, they get along. They greeted each other warmly. It was breathtaking.”

This isn’t just “lip service” or a staged photo opportunity for the local news, though they have been featured on the BBC. It is a genuine, lived experience that trickles down into their respective congregations. Debbie notes that when she teaches her own classes, her interfaith experiences allow her to speak of other traditions with warmth and firsthand knowledge. “I can say, ‘Oh, I’ve got a friend who does this in his religion,’ and what a wonderful tradition that is.”

## From Tragedy to Unity: The Southport Walk

The formation of this specific interfaith group was born from a place of deep sorrow. The stabbings in Southport seemed to be a catalyst for this renewed cooperation. Debbie confirmed that the group, in its current form, coalesced in the wake of those events.

One of their most visible successes is the Walk of Unity. The route is intentionally symbolic: starting at the Mosque, passing by the (historically significant), Christ Church in Lord Street and concluding at the Synagogue.

“It was so well received that we decided to do it as an annual thing,” Debbie says. This walk is more than just a parade; it is a physical manifestation of the group’s presence in the town, showing that while they may occupy different buildings on a Sunday, Saturday, or Friday, they walk the same streets and share the same griefs and hopes.

## Passing the Torch: The Next Generation

A common critique of interfaith work is that it is often the domain of the “older generation” long-standing leaders who have the time and inclination for such meetings. I challenged Debbie on how they are ensuring this spirit of cooperation doesn’t end with the current leadership.

Debbie’s response was a testament to the power of involvement. During the last Walk of Unity, the marshalling wasn’t done by the leadership, but by the “Young Adults” of her church, those between the ages of 18 and 30.

“We asked them if they would marshal, and they did,” she says. “They’re all young people.” Furthermore, the group recently hosted a presentation by the Dialogue Society, an organisation that promotes social cohesion, where the entire event was run by their youth members. By giving young people “skin in the game”, actual responsibilities and roles within the interfaith framework, they are ensuring that the habits of friendship are formed early.

## Facing the “Aggression” of the Internet

It isn’t always easy. Debbie acknowledges that when she posts about interfaith work on social media, she often encounters hostility. “People can get quite aggressive,” she notes. “They say, ‘You shouldn’t be doing this’ or ‘You’re talking to the devil.’” Her approach to these digital “boundary-watchers” is one of quiet resilience. She chooses not to respond to the vitriol, viewing it not as a theological problem, but as a “lack of knowledge and understanding.” For Debbie, the work hasn’t diluted her own faith; rather, it has strengthened it. “It’s promoted my testimony in our Heavenly Father’s plan,” she says. “We are here to learn from each other. It doesn’t mean we have to believe what you believe, but we’re here to learn.”

## A Model for the Future

As the interview concluded, the picture of Southport’s interfaith group was clear: it is a community of “social and accepting” churches and faith centres that are no longer “worried” if anyone will turn up to an open day. When the Mosque or the Synagogue opens its doors now, the town responds. Debbie recalls her own church’s recent open day, where nearly 100 people attended.

The lesson from our conversation is perhaps best summarised by her willingness to take her Sunday School children to a Mosque. “Absolutely, yes,” she says without hesitation.

In a world that often demands we choose a side, the people of Southport are choosing a different path, the path of the neighbour. They are proving that you don’t have to sacrifice your own convictions to hold someone else’s hand. You just have to remember that, at the end of the day, you’re all part of the same family.



**Debbie Sayers Fullwood**

Chair of the Southport Interfaith Group

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## Say It With Flowers

A new group for fellowship, creativity and fun with flowers.

- Entertaining stories
- A witness of our faith
- Tips on basic flower arranging
- Relaxing music
- Homemade refreshments

Led by Izy Liston in the Coffee Lounge  
Leyland Road Methodist Church

**Thursday afternoons, 2 - 4pm**

All are very welcome –  
feel free to bring a friend

### Programme

**May 7th** – “New Life & Resurrection”  
A spring reflection

**May 28th** – “God’s Spirit Lives Among You”  
Witness for Whitsun

**June 25th** – “Everything Beautiful in Its Time”  
A celebration of June bursting out all over

**July 30th** – “Fearfully & Wonderfully Made”  
A look at flowers in the Bible

# Together in Worship

ONE FAITH. ONE FAMILY. ONE IN CHRIST.

## CIRCUIT SERVICE

**11AM | SUNDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2026**

**ST PHILIP & ST PAUL WITH WESLEY CHURCH**  
SCARISBRICK NEW ROAD



*You're warmly invited!* ♥

**ALL CHURCHES.  
ONE SERVICE.  
EVERYONE WELCOME.**

*Let's come together to worship,  
connect and be inspired.* ♥



### Paint Wanted

The Parish Nurses are wanting to decorate their office. If anyone has any left over matt or gloss paint in VIBRANT colours they no longer need, please leave at Leyland Road office or call or text Kathryn on 07803154929 for collection.



## Cornerstone BRUNCH

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May**  
**10.30am - 1.00pm**

You are all invited to a

# prayer meeting

for the work of the  
**Southport and Area Schools Worker Trust**

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**Monday 18th May | at 7 pm**

**at Liverpool Road Methodist Church**

**SASW**trust

