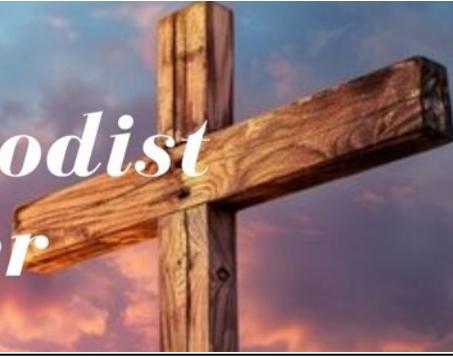


Chelmsford Methodist Circuit Newsletter



January and February 2026 Volume 40

REV ASIF KARAM

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you to every church in our Circuit for all you offered throughout the Christmas season. Your hospitality, creativity, hard work, and willingness to host extra services, Messy Churches, carol singing, advent courses and readings, community events, and outreach truly made a difference. Through your efforts, many heard again the good news of *Emmanuel (God with us)*, and many more felt the warmth of Christ's love through the welcome you offered. This Christmas reminded us that we are all **gifted, redeemed, and valued** in God's sight. These truths lie at the heart of our identity. We are gifted by God's grace, not by our achievements.



As we step into a new year, let us continue to grow our ministry with young people and new families, creating places of belonging, learning, and joy. At the same time, we give thanks for our older and long-standing members, whose faith and wisdom link our generations. Their encouragement and steady presence form a rich inheritance for our Circuit. Many step back with grace so new teams and younger leaders can grow, experiment, and even make mistakes, mistakes that often lead to new skills and fresh ideas in this fast-moving digital age.

Looking toward 2026, I urge and invite each of us to take up two simple commitments:

(1) to invite two people to come to church this year, and

(2) to pray regularly for five friends or neighbours on our street.

God often works quietly and unexpectedly, but prayers offered in Jesus' name are never wasted. We will grow in numbers, in resources, and, above all, in spiritual depth.

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As you read this letter, we stand at the doorway of a new year, one filled with hope and opportunity. We continue our journey through Epiphany and soon will enter Lent. My prayer is that we gather again as a Circuit family at the start of Lent, entering this season with calm hearts and openness to God's renewing grace.

The Lent 2026 theme, **“Our Story, Our Song,”** invites us to remember who we are in God's creation and the theme of creation care will help us meet Christ afresh.

May this year shape us into people who tell God's story with courage, sing God's song with joy, and live God's love intentionally and missionally.

Every blessing in Christ,
Rev. Asif Karam

CIRCUIT ADVENT SERVICE

The Circuit Service had a great turnout, with excellent music and candlelit carols inside and out. Thanks to David, Dianne, their teams, and Rev Asif for organizing the event at Broomfield.



REV DR JENNIFER WALTERS

This Christmas has been my first in Maldon and my first Christmas here in the Chelmsford Circuit, and it has been a season full of colour, creativity, faith, and community. Looking back, I am struck by just how diverse and joyful our celebrations have been, and how many different ways people have come together to mark this special time of year.

It all began with the wider community, as Maldon lit up for Christmas. From the Christmas lights switch-on events to lantern and torchlight parades, there has been a real sense of shared celebration. These events reminded me that Christmas is not only something that happens inside our churches, but something that belongs to the whole town. It was wonderful to see people of all ages gathering, celebrating, and finding light in the darker days of winter.

Within our churches, Advent gave us time to pause and reflect. Through the Advent course, we explored themes of hope, peace, and joy together. These weeks offered space to listen, to share honestly, and to deepen our faith as we prepared our hearts for Christmas. Those conversations have stayed with me and helped shape my experience of the season.

There has also been plenty of joyful noise. Telling the Christmas story at the toddlers' Christmas party was full of joy and chaos in equal measure — laughter, wriggling, excitement, and the reminder that the story of Jesus' birth is for everyone, especially the youngest among us. The children's Christmas party at Halstead brought its own energy, with games, fun, and shared delight filling the room. And Carols and Crafts at Hatfield Peverel brought a very joyful noise to the café, as well as wonder and laughter at the singing puppets, followed by sharing a celebratory Christmas dinner together afterwards.

Making Christingles at Witham with families of all ages was another highlight. Seeing children, parents, grandparents, and carers gathered together, learning and creating, was a powerful sign of the church as a place of welcome and belonging. These moments of connection matter deeply, and I am grateful for them.

As Christmas Eve arrived, the pace slowed. The candle-lit Communion service in Maldon was quiet, prayerful, and beautiful. In the gentle glow of candlelight, we remembered that God comes close, meeting us in stillness as well as celebration: excellent preparation for a joint Midnight Communion service at South Woodham Ferrers. Christmas Day itself was full of joy and worship, and it was a privilege to help out at a community Christmas lunch, sharing food and fellowship with those who might otherwise have been alone.



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It has certainly been a busy first Christmas, but also a deeply meaningful one. I have loved getting to know people better and beginning to build relationships across the circuit.

Now we turn towards a new year. The Methodist Covenant Service always feels very special to me, and it will be a real privilege to lead that service in many of our churches. The words, ***“I am no longer my own, but yours,”*** are ones I speak with my whole heart and soul — a recommitment for the year ahead.

As we look towards 2026, there will be change and development for many of our churches. There are practical challenges to face, including matters around buildings, but there is also much to be excited about. A Lent course lies ahead, along with new creative ideas and projects to explore together, including at Alpha course at South Woodham Ferrers jointly with the Anglican and Catholic congregations.

I step into the year ahead with excitement and anticipation, thankful for all that has been shared so far, and hopeful as we continue to listen, learn, and join in with the mission of God in this place.

Rev Dr Jennifer Walters



The graphic features a large yellow text block on a dark background. The text reads: **Unpack the Christian faith together.** Below this, in a smaller yellow font, is the text: **Try Alpha.** At the bottom left, there is descriptive text: **Join us at Holy Trinity Church, South Woodham Ferrers** followed by the **Thursdays 11:00-1:00** and **from 5th February 2026** details. To the right of the text is a large red graphic element resembling a stylized 'A' or a ribbon. At the bottom left, there is a QR code and the website **alpha.org.uk**. A small red circle with the word **Alpha** is located at the bottom right of the graphic.

An open invitation for you to explore and ask as many questions as you like.

Alpha is open to all congregational members.

BROOMFIELD AT CHRISTMAS



Open your Church doors and let God do the rest

On December 15th the church doors of Broomfield methodist were opened to welcome folk to the village Christmas Tree Festival.

Our first visitors on Monday afternoon were not visitors at all because the Messy church Team were delighted to greet 36 children, mums and carers to our Christmas Messy Church. It was a busy afternoon, and the team worked hard to help with the story telling and the crafts activities, as well as providing refreshments and of course making our wonderful Messy church family feel loved and cared for. It was a lovely atmosphere, and the church was filled with lively chatter, activity and laughter.

Below are some of the craft activities the children made.



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For the next three days the church was open for visitors to come and view the trees and to find 13 different nativity sets around the church building. Each nativity set had a letter by it and once all the letters were collected, the challenge was to use the letters to make two words: Nativity Scene. Both adults and children were engaged in this activity. As well as welcoming people into the church we were also able to showcase our garden which had an outside nativity set, an eco tree and was beautifully lit by lights and lanterns.



On Saturday the church was open from 1:30pm to 4pm for more visitors to view the trees and there were craft activities for the children and carols led by S. Mary's songsters and the Chelmsford Male Voice Choir. During these days there were a number of sacred, special moments. A lady who was not looking forward to Christmas as one of her parent's had died. She felt more able to face Christmas and having the tree festival in a church had really helped. A mum brought her daughter who has special needs and is very anxious going to new places. We offered both mum and her daughter a safe place to be themselves. Her lovely daughter played very happily transferring beads from a jar to the table and back again. Both gave us wonderful hugs as they left. Another lady, whose husband was very poorly in hospital, found time to have a little peace and recharge her batteries. One toddler grandson was fascinated by the Nativity trail and when he came to the outside one got into the stable himself. He then picked up baby Jesus, gave him a kiss and gently put him back in the manger. The children from the nursery also visited and one toddler loved the Playmobile nativity set but left it in disarray. A 5 year old then took great care in putting it back together again. One of our Messy Church children was fascinated by the idea that Jesus was God who came down to earth in human form and told

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anyone who would listen!

Friday had a different feel. In the morning, the Church hall was filled with toddlers and their mums for the Christmas party.



In the evening, the church was open for families to come and light candles to remember those babies who were stillborn or had been miscarried. Those with children made angels and tree decorations to remember their siblings, whilst the adults also decorated hearts to remember their babies. A number of families attended, and the safe, peaceful church bathed in candlelight gave them the opportunity to talk to other families carrying the same pain as well as time to sit with their own thoughts. Many visited the peace garden and the trees of remembrance in the garden as well as the one outside the church, where their babies' names are recorded. We are grateful that the bereavement midwives from Broomfield hospital also gave their time to attend.



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And so, to Sunday, when at 4pm the church was filled once again with children of all ages and their mums and dads, grandparents and carers who came to listen to Christmas stories, sing well known Christmas songs, drink hot chocolate and eat gingerbread men, as well as more Christmas Crafts. Then it was hotfoot to St Mary's for a beautiful village carol service.



Throughout the week the children in the village were following the Messy nativity Sheep trail, finding the names of 9 sheep displayed in venues throughout the village. Our sheep was aptly named Wesley



It was hard work but great fun, seeds were sown and we leave God to do the rest. I do encourage you to open up your church doors.
Dianne Hodgkinson

Dianne Hodgkinson

HALSTEAD - CHRISTMAS CHILDREN'S PARTY

On Saturday 13th December (for the first time in many years!), we had a wonderful Sunday School party with all the children. We were very lucky to have 6 children.

We made paper chains which Majesty & Precious really enjoyed with help from Rev Jennifer.

There were also lots of fun games such as musical statues, Christmas bingo, pass the parcel (with a challenge every time they took off each wrapper).

Then there was a very exciting moment with a special visitor - "Father Christmas!" who brought presents for all the children.

We all enjoyed some lovely festive food at the end of the party.

A big thank you for all the Sunday School teachers and helpers who made this a very special occasion.

Ann Johnson



HALSTEAD - CAROL SERVICE

On Sunday 14th December we held an all age Carol Service at Halstead. The service was put together by the service leaders and the Sunday School. We had some of the usual Carols and bible readings and also some poems read by various members of the congregation.

The Sunday School decided they wanted a modern day Nativity Play as they felt the message from the birth of Jesus was just as relevant today and they wanted to demonstrate this. Therefore Jesus was born in the Summer House at the back of the Premier Inn in Bethlehem. The Shepherds had to leave their game of Roblox when they heard the message to go to see the baby. The Wise men caught a train to Bethlehem and brought presents of gold (necklaces) . a fragrant candle and Sudocrem which, like Myrrh can soothe anything.

The reflection was given by Priscilla Lartey The service was a real success especially with the help of Archie & Ronnie who were back from their sixth form college.

It really was an all age service with ages ranging from 94 down to 4 months old. It was a true service of love and praise, peace and joy. We even had a four month old baby Jesus, we could not get more authentic than that .

Afterwards, as is the tradition, we had mince pies and sausage rolls. A wonderful experience for all of us. A good start to Christmas.

Heather Williams



HALSTEAD - CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

On Sunday 21st December I stayed in the school room at church and together with the Junior Church I made Christingles. We firstly took an orange to represent, of course, the world. I explained the reason for the red ribbon around the circumference of the orange (representing the blood of Christ which was shed for us) and this was the trickiest bit (keeping the ribbon tight enough on the orange!)

Then I explained why we added cocktail sticks on each “corner” to represent North, South, East and West. All four corners of the earth surrounded by God’s love. The sweets were added to the cocktail sticks representing God’s gifts to the world and finally we added a candle.

This, of course, represented Jesus Christ, the light of the world bringing hope to people in darkness.

Christingle celebrations have been taking place all over the world for over fifty years. The first Christingle Service in Britain took place at Lincoln Cathedral in 1968 but Christingles themselves go back much further to a Moravian church in Germany. In 1747 Bishop Johannes de Watteville wanted a simple way to explain the happiness that had come to people through Jesus and he created the “Christingle” to do this.

We rehearsed a small “playlet” for the congregation at the end of their service to explain why we made the Christingles and this brought laughter from the congregation as the boys had practiced this and spoke with relish!

Our small church here in Halstead wish all our friends in the Circuit a happy and healthy New Year and for God’s blessings to be with each and everyone, now and for ever.

Chrissie Armitage



MALDON TODDLER'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

MONDAY 15TH DECEMBER

This year we welcomed 30 children from 4 months to 4 years old to the Mum's and Tots Christmas Party at Maldon Methodist Church. After some time playing with the toys and making Christmas cards and decorations, the children went into the church to hear the Christmas story with Rev Jennifer. The children joined in with actions and Christmas songs before they went back into the hall for their party food. It was a very busy and lively morning of Christmas celebrations before the Christmas holiday break. Every child left happy with a party bag full of lovely Christmas treats and the families also made donations for Action for Children of £70. Thank you to all the volunteers who made it possible to host so many families and special thanks to Ron and Christine for making the whole event run so smoothly.

Rev Dr Jennifer Walters



WITHAM CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION: CHRISTINGLE AND NATIVITY—SUNDAY

21ST DECEMBER

The Sunday afternoon before Christmas saw Witham Methodist Church organize a Christmas Celebration with a difference! Families were initially welcomed into the foyer area where they enjoyed making their Christingles together before moving into the worship area for the rest of the service. It started with Rev Jennifer talking to the children about their Christingles and what they symbolized. Then the members of the Saturday Club took over with their modern take on the nativity story about a young star being given a very important first assignment to shine over a special stable in Bethlehem. All the actors gave an excellent performance, and everyone got involved with the audience participation and Christmas carol singing. Special thanks to Niel and all the other volunteers for master-minding the nativity play, and to all the children for playing their parts brilliantly.

The service ended with the lighting of the Christingles while everyone sang 'Away in a Manger' together by candlelight. It was a lovely, atmospheric ending and many people stayed to enjoy refreshments together afterwards. Thank you to everyone who helped with the refreshments and to Jenny for organizing the Christingle-making..

Rev Dr Jennifer Walters



CHRISTMAS AT TRINITY

CHRISTINE SERVICE—SUNDAY 20TH DECEMBER

The Christingle service before Christmas was a great success, with many children attending and Margaret and her family joining in, recalling cherished memories of past services. Numerous Christingles were made, and everyone received goodie bags. Thanks to the stewards for assisting Rev Asif. The afternoon was filled with family fun and laughter.



CAROLS ON THE FORECOURT—SATURDAYS IN DECEMBER

Despite the cold weather, Carols on the Forecourt—featuring several dedicated members alongside Rev. Asif—successfully engaged individuals passing through Chelmsford town centre. Many passersby responded with smiles and waves. It was noteworthy that there was significant foot traffic in front of Trinity; the ongoing challenge remains finding effective ways to welcome these individuals into the church—a goal to focus on in the new year.



CHRISTMAS EVE HOLY COMMUNION AT 4PM

Rev Asif Karam introduced a 4pm Circuit Service to accommodate families and those for whom 11pm is too late. This change was well received,

Safeguarding Newsletter

January- February 2026

Welcome

Welcome to the latest edition of our Safeguarding Newsletter! This newsletter aims to keep you informed about important safeguarding updates, best practices, and relevant resources. **are all responsible for creating a safe environment.**

Training

Foundation Module

- **Online - 20/01/2026 1pm-5pm** (20 spaces available)
- **Face to Face - 20/02/2025 at Trinity Methodist Church - The Link 9.30am - 1.30pm** (24 spaces available).
- To book email: esther.burton@chelmsfordcircuit.org.

Advanced Module

Click the link
to book

Monday 26th January 2026 @ 2pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1977887920012?aff=oddtdtcreator>

Thursday 19th February 2026 @ 6.30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1977888064444?aff=oddtdtcreator>

Tuesday 24th February 2026 @ 2pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1977888251002?aff=oddtdtcreator>

Thursday 19th March 2026 @ 6.30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1977888303158?aff=oddtdtcreator>

Wednesday 25th March 2026 @ 6.30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1977888381392?aff=oddtdtcreator>

Safeguarding Sunday

As a Circuit we will be setting aside one Sunday per year to have a focus in the service on Safeguarding. There is a website with all the resources you may need. <https://safeguardingsunday.org> It would be great to see this advertised in your church newsletters and to have feedback, when the time comes, as to how it went. More information will be sent out nearer the time to help plan.

SAFEGUARDING SUNDAY
2026 IS ON THE 15TH
NOVEMBER

Contact Us

If you have any questions or concerns related to safeguarding, do not hesitate to contact me, the Circuit Safeguarding Officer - esther.burton@chelmsfordcircuit.org.uk Thank you for your continued commitment to safeguarding. By working together, we can create a safer environment for everyone.



Brighter Days

Silencing The Chatter

My conversation with my inner critic



Patrick Regan OBE

Award winning author, activist, speaker



An inspirational evening of

live music, theatre, and interviews.

Saturday 17th January, 7pm incl. Q & A

Christ Church, London Road, Braintree, CM7 2LD

Tickets £8 each, available at:

admin@christchurchbraintree.org.uk and 01376 326628

Parking is available in various streets around the church.

Welcome to Silencing the Chatter: A Conversation with the Inner Critic. This performance explores the impact of self-doubt and anxiety, and how negative thoughts can overshadow progress and achievements. Many of us struggle with a lack of self-compassion in our daily lives, often fixating on criticism rather than recognising growth. Psychologist Dr. Kristen Neff highlights three key practices that can help reframe these patterns:

- Self-kindness
- Common humanity
- Mindfulness

As these themes unfold in the play, the hope is to inspire greater compassion toward ourselves, reminding us to doubt our doubts and recognise our inherent worth.



Patrick Regan, OBE - Writer

Patrick is a Director of Brighter Days, the author of 7 books, and founder of two charities. He was awarded an OBE by the late Queen Elizabeth II for his contribution to Justice and Wellbeing. He recently became accredited with the Centre of Compassionate Leadership and is an honorary fellow of the London South Bank University



Luka Petrović - The Inner Critic

Luka has worked as a child actor, appearing in the BBC's Upstart Crow Christmas Special and Casualty. He has played Tiny Tim at The Old Vic and was featured in adverts for Walkers Crisps and Volvo. Recently, he appeared in a Swedish educational TV show alongside his family.



Natasha Petrović - Singer & Violinist

Having played the violin since the age of 4, Natasha has toured Europe as a principal violinist following her Yehudi Menuhin scholarship. She has performed in many prestigious venues including the Royal Albert Hall, at several music festivals, and contributed to recordings for a range of artists such as Philippa Hanna, Graham Kendrick and Judie Tzuke.

MALDON CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Thursday 27th November was certainly a memorable evening at Maldon Methodist Church.

The Church was open to the community from 6pm and we presented an evening of Carols and Christmas music. We were once again supported by our friends from Hatfield Peverel Church who led us in some of the more modern carols and we heard new compositions by

Eddie. The Cole- Nije singers blessed us with their singing in the unique way only they can. Members of our own church joined by Val Carter sung carols and asked those watching to choose their favourite carols – some came up to the stage to sing with us, and one lady used sign language beautifully, adding a very special moment to the evening.

I am truly grateful to all who supported this event – decorating the window ledges, supporting the sound and AV, sharing on the door, playing the music and offering refreshments to people who came into the Church.

It is amazing what we can achieve when we work together, and we were truly blessed to be able to share the Christmas message in this unique way and I know God will bless all our efforts.

Julie Hill



MUSIC VARIETY SHOW

In Aid of Maldon Methodist Church Roof Fund

Date: 24th of January 2026
Times: 1pm and 7pm

Venue: Maldon Methodist Church CM9 5BS

Featuring: Family friendly music from musical theatre, covers & original compositions

Interval: Light refreshments on offer

Tickets: £10 each

Email: Nathan Songer - mm-tickets@outlook.com

**Parking: Paid parking at Edward Bright Close,
Maldon CM9 5RU**

**ALL ARE WELCOME!
ENJOY A DAY OF MUSIC WHILE
SUPPORTING A GREAT CAUSE.**

HATFIELD PEVEREL METHODIST CHURCH

HPMC has been busy over the last 2 months, with many activities to enrich us, while trying to continue making connections with our community

At the celebration of our 150th Anniversary in October, we responded to one of the refrains from the September Circuit Local Preacher Service when there was the encouragement to keep worship vibrant and relevant. We were able to draw together some of our previous members and associates and recall some of the old names familiar as our past leaders. Also, bracketed by parts of old communion rail and alongside the Church cross, there was a timeline of artefacts going back 150 years to the bricks the building was made from. Then forward, into the new century with old hymn books, bibles, the scales from the adjoining old post office, the lamp shade from the 1930 electrical installation, detail of wartime casualty and many photographs of the last 50 years. Our minister Rev Jennifer gave us an address based on Matthew 7:24-27 and reminded us the real Church is the body of people doing God's work in the community. Naturally, the service was followed with tea and cake, and lots of mutual encouragement to carry on the good work.

We were pleased to join our friends at Maldon when they had their church open for the evening as part of the Christmas Lights Event and we were glad to join other friends in some musical celebrations. We enjoyed singing two of Eddie's carols as well as other Christmas songs. We were pleased to join others at Broomfield to provide musical support for the worship at the Circuit Advent event. It was a lovely time of sharing the anticipation associated with Advent, concluding with a time of carol singing by candlelight in the car park.

The cross and Lamp from the old church building also featured in our Barn praise on 7th December. Santa's grotto was in our usual room at the Village Hall so we met to worship in the barn, thanks to John and Jenny. Bacon rolls made a good start to our time together and there was a very special feeling of nativity with an atmosphere resonant of how a stable might have been.



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Our Carols and Crafts event in the Village Hall on 14th December was very well-received, with the welcome addition of puppets to share the singing. There were 20 of us who enjoyed a Christmas meal together in our room, courtesy of the Coffee Lounge team. It was delicious!

For the third year running, we placed a tree in the entrance to the Village Hall, inviting anyone to hang a label on it, sharing their hope for Christmas, someone they would like to remember, or a prayer. As before, we will offer those thoughts and prayers for our neighbours as requested during a time of post-Christmas worship.

It has become an annual tradition for us to sing carols in the Duke of Wellington, and our offering was greatly enjoyed by customers, some of whom came to stand near us and join in. It definitely felt like we were bringing church and the real meaning of Christmas into our community

As we look forward to a new year, we hope to be able to introduce our Community Outreach Worker who we hope will commence at the beginning of January. This appointment reflects our vision on the sale of the church building in Hatfield Peverel. We hoped to become more visible in our community, being a physical church presence and shining the light of Jesus in the village by joining in current activities as well as establishing some new ones. Our prayers for this initiative have continued for more than 3 years and we are very excited to see what God may have planned for us. Watch this space!

Jane Cook and John Clemo



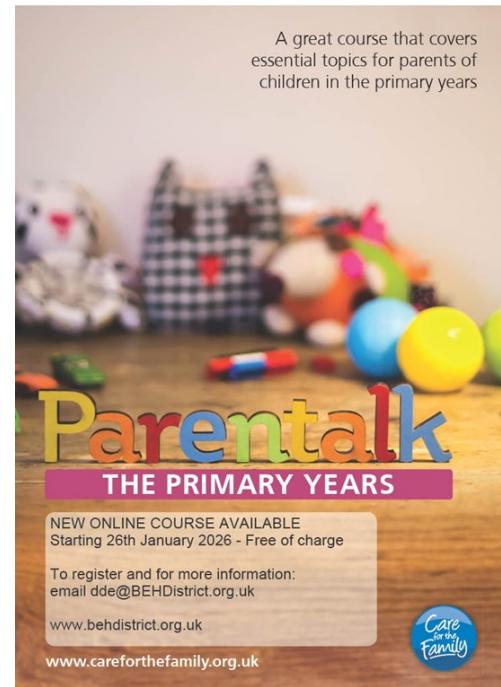
A GREAT COURSE THAT COVERS ESSENTIAL TOPICS FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN THE PRIMARY YEARS.

Parentalk - The Primary Years is an opportunity for parents and other carers to explore the parenting of the primary age group. **It may also be useful for those working with this age group in our churches too.**

The course, run by the district, will be held on Zoom and starts on Monday 26th January 2026 from 7.30pm. The course lasts for 6 sessions, and the other sessions are on Mondays 2nd, 9th and 23rd February and 2nd and 9th March.

Email for the zoom link:

[Email: dde@BEHDistrict.org.uk](mailto:dde@BEHDistrict.org.uk)



A new monthly drop in for 2026 for those working with Children and Young people from toddlers up to teenagers, and those who hope to!

A chance to share stories and challenges and also to explore resources to support and grow youth work.

Starting Tuesday 20th January 2026 at 7.30pm on Zoom

To register for this or future drop ins, please email DDE@BehDistrict.org.uk

Future dates Monday 16th February, Wednesday 18th March, Friday 24th April

Thursday 28th May, Tuesday 23rd June, Monday 20th July attend when you can.

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

Morning Worship Halstead Methodist Church 4.1.26

As many worship leaders and preachers will know, you can never be sure what you will be faced with when you arrive at church. On this particular morning there had been a break-in at the church where the unused front door had been forced open. A burglar had got into the church, possibly rummaged around by the safe, and made a hasty search of the kitchen. It didn't appear that anything was taken: the plate behind the communion table, and the CD player were left untouched. The suggestion came from a neighbour that a cyclist had exited the driveway on Friday afternoon and this was taken to be suspicious.

The decision was initially made to cancel church and some people were sent away, however as there were already so many of the congregation in the school-room, those that were left decided to carry on leaving a steward to "mind" the potential crime scene. The police eventually came, and it is assumed an investigation is ongoing

Those that were left of the congregation (and the schoolroom seemed quite full) were helped to worship by the lectionary: Psalm 147 v12+13

Extol the Lord, Jerusalem; praise your God, Zion.

He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your people within you.

In the words of the popular slogan:

Keep calm and carry on!

John Clemo



The ‘Gathering’, an annual event organised by Churches Together in Essex and East London was this year held at Trinity Methodist Church, Chelmsford, on 16 October 2025.

A time of worship set the scene for what was an inspiring and challenging event. The Theme for this Year’s Gathering was **Racial Justice** and the programme included

presentations by Shemara Fletcher- Hoyte from Churches Together in England (CTE) and Revd. Sharon Quilter, Diocesan Racial Justice Officer.

Ms Fletcher- Hoyte’s presentation began with an activity involving everyone present placing ourselves on an imaginary line – 0 to 100 to reveal the different groups of people included in our personal circles and giving reasons for the spot we had chosen. The importance of including different groups in our circle of friends was encouraged.

In speaking on the issue of Racism, she drew attention to the deep fractures that were being created by privilege and how ideological narratives were being used to exploit fear and the scapegoating of Migrants instead of addressing the economic and political fractures. A meeting in this current climate could not be complete with a reference to St George’s flag and the rise of “Christian Nationalism”. She remarked that nationalism should not become a golden calf and that the Jesus being portrayed on the flags was Himself a Migrant. Ms Fletcher-Hoyte shared the belief that the Church has the capacity to shape political thought through theology and advocacy. How the Church, as the Body of Christ, is given the voice to speak is urgent? Prayer, theological education, chaplaincy and strategic partnerships are indeed some of the channels to be pursued.

After a sumptuous lunch laid out by the Team at Trinity, Revd. Quilter in her presentation took us on Treasure Hunt. She posed the question, “What do we do with Treasure?” She then spoke about finding Treasure and about how diversity is a treasure which God values. The Windrush Generation was described as a hidden treasure and she then outlined the struggles some from the Windrush Generation had had to face and are still facing. She went on to state that the History of Global majority people has been shameful. It has been a case of treasuring things more than people

She opined that we should see ourselves as Treasures and see others as Treasures too. A complete change of mindset would be required of Treasures, a Christ centred approach to learning about different cultures and a change in our pattern of behaviour. We would need to come together around a shared common goal, that of transforming unjust structures, love being the key.

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The Gathering ended in a time of prayer. It was, however, noted that the attendance was quite low this year as compared to last year. Could the reason be the theme – Racial Justice. During the discussion in groups a Baptist Colleague told me that when members of the Church he pastors asked him why was he attending the Gathering since they were not racists. The latter suggests two important facts, 1) The acknowledgement that racism exists, 2) the assumption that because we are not racist, we should not engage with racism. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Church as the Body of Christ cannot turn a blind eye on what is happening currently in our country and this does not mean condoning illegal immigration. The issue of St, George's Flags tied to lamp posts, one of the signs of Christian Nationalism, giving the indication that some people are not welcome, makes the task of addressing racism even more urgent.

These words attributed to Edmund Burke, “The only thing necessary for evil to flourish is for good people to do nothing”, speaks volumes. How do we engage, therefore? For some, this is too ‘heavy’ an issue to engage with. Is it possible for such engagement to begin in a relaxed environment even in the context of worship, for example? Could the disciplines of prayer and fasting (though joked about), be the starting points for such engagement?

At Witham Methodist Church, we attempted engaging with the Flag issue in a Café Style, Inter-Generational Worship Service on 12th October last, while commemorating Black History Month. The service included, hymns and prayers, a quiz session, which was followed by a skit. The set Epistle and Gospel readings for the day (2 Timothy 2: 8-15; Luke 17: 11-19) lent themselves to topics for discussion around tables and reflection on enslaved Africans in Chains and the Stranger. The importance of separating fact from fiction, understanding the historical context, current causes of conflict, and the climate change are factors that cannot be ignored. The service, which ended with the Sacrament of Holy Communion, was a real eye opener for all.

This piece would be incomplete without drawing attention to the privileged position that the United Kingdom is in. Welcoming of people of every nation, ethnic group and language, gives a foretaste of the vision found in Revelation 7: 9, “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, ethnic group, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands”. Let us as the Church, the Body of Christ, rise up and make this a reality, beginning right where we are to the glory of God!

Rev Olufemi Cole-Njie

(reposting from October 2025)



An Angel came to Lincolnshire

It was on Christmas Eve
Or that's a tale of which I hear
Who knows what to believe?

A curate is appointed in Lincolnshire
At Bible college he made the grade
Rural deprivation won't deter
His enthusiasm has yet to fade

But his progress in Lincolnshire
Needs some serious improvement
The Bishop worries he's too aloof
Theology an impediment?

A phone call comes for communion
He must gather the elements and go
He drives along the frosty track
Into a rough area he doesn't know

A cottage door opens in Lincolnshire
He's not sure he should go in
Here's a family in rural poverty
A sad man with a furtive grin?

Prepare the Lord's table in Lincolnshire
The family are invited to confess
The true light has come into the world
Glory in the word made flesh

Strange things happen in Lincolnshire
the man turns away his face white
the curate packs up, doesn't demur
time for midnight mass tonight?

Events unexplained in Lincolnshire
Time passes things move on
Another parish our curate can acquire
And to a prison chaplaincy he's gone

Jail visits happen in Lincolnshire
The curate sees the sad man again
Asks him what he was up to before
What was he hoping to gain?

Robberies happen in Lincolnshire
I was going to take all you had
behind you stood a being much higher
So I couldn't do anything bad

Was an Angel seen in Lincolnshire
It all seems so long ago
Longer to Shepherds and Angel choirs
Where the light of the world could grow

The curate went alone in Lincolnshire
He thought no one had his back
Maybe an Angel came with holy fire
And saved him from an attack
See Hebrews 13 v2/3 JRC 18.12.25

John Clemo



Winter Newsletter 2025

Welcome to this edition of our newsletter, the last of 2025, and it has been a busy few months with some new events as you will see as you read the latest news from both the Executive team and from around the Districts. MWiB is certainly alive and active.

As an Executive team we have been together on several occasions this quarter as people are able, depending on other commitments. We were glad that Barbara Easton was able to be in London for the Butterfly Service—we have missed her on other occasions as she recovered from eye surgery. Similarly Madeleine has had to miss events with her college commitments but we were glad to see her at our most recent Trustees meeting in October which was a time of looking forward to the future.



In September we gathered at Stamford for the Commissioning Service of our CoChair Olive Ruvimbo Ruzvidzo. What a wonderful occasion that was, with singing & dancing led by the Zimbabwe Fellowship Choir, a powerful sermon from Revd Charity Tozivepi-Nzegwu, warm fellowship and good food from Second Helpings. Former CoChair Maggie was with us. This service can be viewed on our MWiB YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/live/zvdAyft7U3M>

Five of the Executive team gathered in Holyrood House, Thirsk in November for our annual Retreat led this year by Deacon Jenny Parnell on the theme Art and Spirituality. Jenny encouraged us to play and explore with paint and the results can be seen here. What you can't see is the wonderful time we shared singing worship songs as we created!



Our CoChairs Leonora & Olive can be contacted by email: cochairs.mwib@gmail.com

All that remains is to wish each of you a very happy and blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year. We hope to see you at one of our events in 2026.

Bronwen Braisdell communications.mwib@gmail.com

[Read more of the Winter Newsletter for MWiB](#)

<https://www.chelmsfordcircuit.co.uk/admin6/mwib/>

Equipping for Equality

A development session for those in the Methodist Church
passionate about Justice, Dignity and Solidarity

Neurodiversity awareness

Thursday 29th January

7pm - 9pm

on Zoom



Overview

An opportunity to raise awareness of neurodiversity within the church, led by Revd Jonny Bell.

During this session we will explore the topic of neurodiversity, with particular attention to ADHD, Dyslexia, and Dyspraxia. The session will be broken down into four main parts: first, we will have the opportunity to experience what it can be like for neurodivergent people ; second, we will hear the experience of a neurodivergent minister; third, we will get some tips on how we can be more inclusive as a justice-seeking church for neurodivergent people; and fourth, we will have a chance for questions and answers. Please have a square piece of paper with you for one of the activities in the session.

The Zoom link for the session will be sent via email prior to the session (not upon confirmation of booking).

This is a repeat of the session Jonny led in August 2024.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/neurodiversity-awareness-registration-1977889303149>

MCHW'S SPRING FESTIVAL FOR
CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGEMENT
AND RENEWAL

DAFFODIL DAY 2026

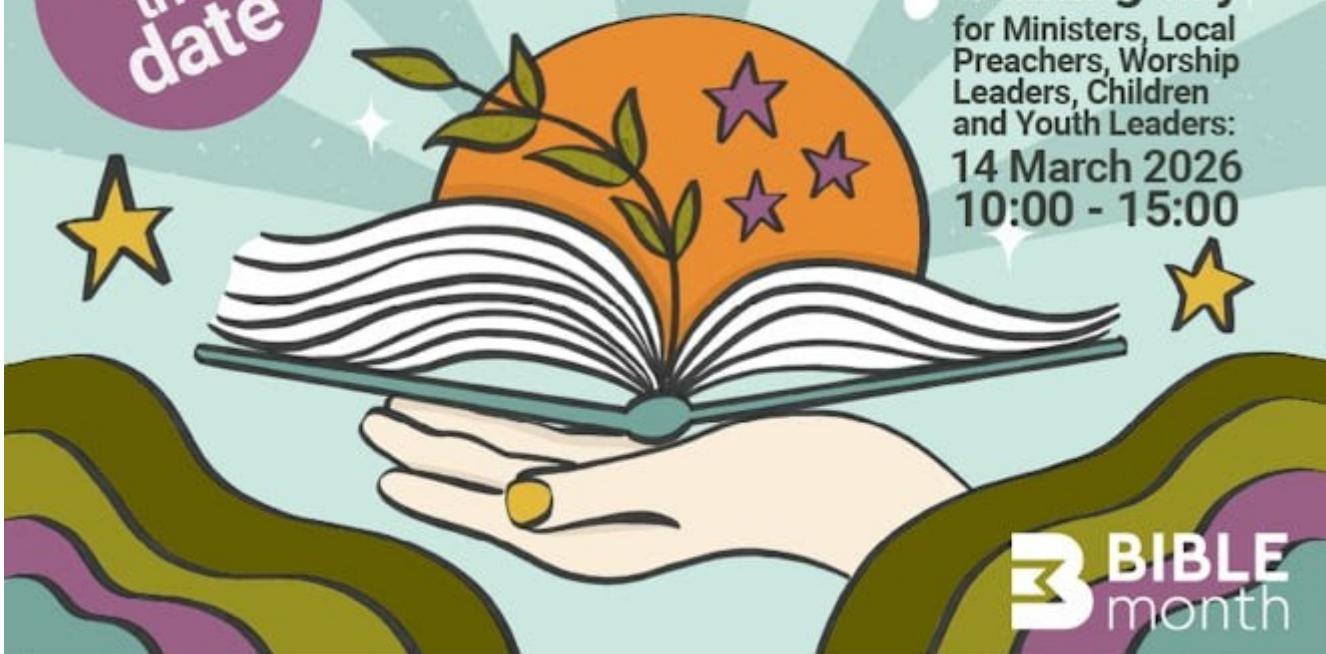
SAVE THE DATE!
SATURDAY 7th
MARCH 2026



Save
the
date

Philippians

Training day
for Ministers, Local
Preachers, Worship
Leaders, Children
and Youth Leaders:
14 March 2026
10:00 - 15:00



 BIBLE
month

THE CIRCUIT NEWSLETTER

This is **YOUR** newsletter.

By contributing to the circuit newsletter, you play a vital role in enriching the spiritual life of the entire circuit. Your articles can inspire others to take action, provide comfort in times of need, and encourage a deeper understanding of faith.

Moreover, your contributions help to create a vibrant and dynamic newsletter that reflects the diversity and richness of our church communities.

Email: karen.murrell@chelmsfordcircuit.org.uk

WE WANT TO
HEAR FROM YOU



Circuit Administrator: Karen Murrell.

Email: karen.murrell@chelmsfordcircuit.org.uk

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