



Chelmsford Circuit

Issue 28

Newsletter Date: November & December 2023

**Scratch beneath
the surface
this Advent
and Christmas**



Advent and Christmas 2023 Resources

Out of our ordinary acts, in our ordinary lives, the world-transforming, extraordinary love of God can shine through.

It goes without saying that the Advent-Christmas season is a busy one for churches.

But it is also a wonderful opportunity to connect

with people who don't normally attend church and who might come to a service in this period. These resources are intended to help you engage with the Methodist Church's Advent and Christmas campaign for 2023, *Out of the Ordinary*, and reach your local community at a key moment in the year.

Campaign

This campaign for 2023 is *Out of the Ordinary*. Share how the wonder of God's love is revealed in the ordinary...

- a seemingly ordinary birth becomes God's out of the ordinary world-saving event through Jesus.
- every day, ordinary acts of kindness can breakthrough to the extraordinary.

We'll be directing people to [our campaign website page](https://www.methodist.org.uk/outoftheordinary/) during Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, where they'll be able to watch our Christmas film, sign up for daily Advent reflections and find their local Methodist Church.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/outoftheordinary/>

What do the Christmas Cards you send say about you? These are my personal thoughts, and you may not agree with them, however what I have written may provide a pause for thought both when you write and also when you open Christmas cards this year.

Do you find writing Christmas Cards a pleasure or a chore? Is it a part of your year you look forward to or something you dread? With the help of Google I have managed to find out the following information about the first Christmas Card.

The first known item that looked a bit like a Christmas card was given to King James I of England (who was also King James VI of Scotland) in 1611. This was more like a large ornamental manuscript rather than a card as we think of them today. The custom of sending Christmas cards, as we know them today, was started in the UK in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole. He



was a senior civil servant the Post Office and he wondered how the Post Office could be used more by ordinary people.

Sir Henry had the idea of Christmas Cards with his friend John Horsley, who was an artist. They designed the first card and sold them

for 1 shilling each. That is only 5p today! The card had three panels. The outer two panels showed people caring for the poor and in the center panel was a family having a large Christmas dinner! Some people didn't like the card because it showed a child being given a glass of wine! About 1000 were printed and sold.

Now back to us. First of all there are people who don't send cards at all and say that they give money to charity instead. If they do give then the charity benefits, but I call them the abdicationalists. To me it seems that they simply can't be bothered with us, like a papal indulgence they'll pay money and we go out of their thoughts!

Next there are those who simply write "Terry and June" and the bottom of the card and if we are lucky we get a "from". I imagine them sitting there with the cards, signing them and leaving the envelopes blank and addressing them later or when they get one from us! To me they are the minimalists.

At the other extreme are the round-robiners, who insert A page of A4, possibly printed on both sides into their cards, detailing what the sender did on holiday this year, the colour they had the house painted and what little Johnny did at scout camp this year. Personally, I used to file those in what the civil service call the "round file", or "WPB1", but now it's the paper sack. You can of course get the combination of the minimalists and the round robiners!

So you may ask what do I do? Well remember this is just my personal view.

Firstly, it's an activity I enjoy and since being retired I can spend more time on it. Cup of tea at my side, Christmas carols playing I start to write with a fountain pen. I write "To" the Christian names of the recipients at the top of the card and then at the bottom I try and find something unique, relevant or funny to form a link to the recipient(s) concerned – and yes it takes effort! Perhaps I thank them for their help, or wish them well in the garden next year and by doing that I'm trying to say that they are important to me and I wish them well for the season and the coming year.

Mind you, I am not all sweetness and light, I have dropped some people off my Christmas card list!

So what will you do this year? Will you join the abdicationalists, the minimalists, the round-robiners, or will you be a carer as you write your cards this year?

Mike Fogg

“So God imparts
to human hearts
the blessings of
his heaven.”

What is **Christmas** really all about?

What happened to the **Baby Jesus**?

What has it got to do with **me**?

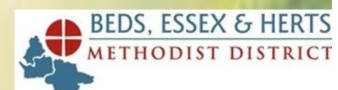
If the Christmas season leaves you with unanswered questions then this is an opportunity to explore those questions.

God, Jesus and the journey of life in 6 sessions

A gentle introduction to the Christian Faith and what it is all about. The course is there for you to explore the Christian Faith with no commitment to attend church.

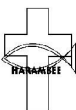
New Start Course begins Wednesday 24th January on Zoom

Email Angela Brydon dde@BEHDistrict.org.uk to register and for details





Harambée Presents



Saturday 2nd December 2pm & 7:30pm
Maldon Methodist Church
High Street, Maldon
Admission £5
(pay on the door)



St Augustine Church
New Bowers Way, Springfield, North CM1 6GQ
<https://staugustinespringfield.org.uk/>

Chelmsford Male Voice Choir
and
Trinity Music and Drama

Present

A
Christmas
Concert

FRIDAY 15 DEC AT 7.30 PM

AT
TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH,
RAINSFORD ROAD, CHELMSFORD

TICKETS: £10

Tickets available via the website:
cmvchoir.co.uk
Also available to purchase from members
or on the door.

Chelmsford Male Voice Choir CIO -
Registered Charity No. 11643982



Maldon Methodist Church

6pm Thursday 30th November 2023

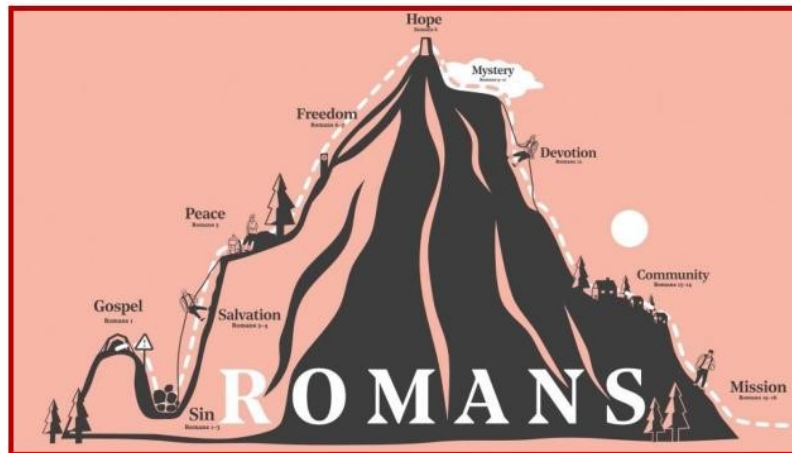


Join the Christmas Carols Choir, pop along to the
High Street to view the many Christmas stalls and
then come back and sing some more if you want to.

Maldon Methodist Church, High Street, Maldon CM9 5PB
<https://www.maldonmethodistchurch.org.uk/>

BIBLE SOCIETY COURSE ON THE BOOK OF ROMANS

I have investigated the Bible Society Course on the Book of Romans. It works like the Bible Course by using videos of Andrew Ollerton presenting from Rome itself. There are study materials and a daily readings plan as well as other material for presenters and preachers too. Andrew has also written a book to go with the training programme. The Bible Society website says that, "Using the metaphor of a mountain climb, we'll be guided through the Letter to the Romans covering these key themes shown below.



I have scheduled the dates below so that you can put them on your 2024 calendar or put them in your diary. Again it will be possible to move between Zoom and Face to Face formats. Note that the Methodist District have a meeting at Trinity on the 13th March 2024, so we are moving to the Tuesday for the face to face session that week.

Face to Face Date Wednesdays at 2pm in the Link at Trinity	Session and Subject	Zoom Date Tuesdays at 7:30pm
28 th February 2024	Session 1: The Gospel	27 th February 2024
6 th March 2024	Session 2: Sin	5 th March 2024
Tuesday 12 th March 2024	Session 3: Salvation	12 th March 2024
20 th March 2024	Session 4: Peace	19 th March 2024
27 th March 2024	Session 5: Freedom	26 th March 2024
We will have a break for the summer		
11 th September 2024	Session 6: Hope	10 th September 2024
18 th September 2024	Session 7: Mystery	17 th September 2024
25 th September 2024	Session 8: Devotion	24 th September 2024
2 nd October 2024	Session 9: Community	1 st October 2024
9 th October 2024	Session 10: Mission	8 th October 2024

. There is a short video about the course accessible by the link below.

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/resources/the-romans-course/>

Mike Fogg
mikefogg@btinternet.com

By email: David Hodgkinson
broomfieldmethodistchurch@gmail.com

22nd September 2023

Civic Centre, Duke Street,
Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1JE

Dear David,

Homes for Ukraine

I am writing to thank you and your colleagues for the help and support you have given to the Ukrainian families who have settled in Chelmsford over the last year, and of course to Tetyana helping her too.

We both know how the need for housing is usually accompanied by other issues such as access to education, employment and social inclusion and I can not imagine how much harder it would have been for the Council's Housing Service to try and help these families in isolation. The funding that you have raised and contributed towards the cost of securing homes has helped us stretch the Council's funding further and hopefully meet the needs of even more people. At a time when the cost and availability of housing is a greater problem than either of us have ever experienced before, the help and support you have provided has been invaluable.

I know that there have been many others working with you over the last year or so and I would be grateful if you could extend my thanks to them too, even those who may have only briefly been involved have helped show our friends from Ukraine that there is still compassion and hope in Chelmsford, from which they can begin to rebuild their lives.

This letter should have been written and sent much sooner, please forgive me for not sending it to you sooner. Thank you once again.

Yours sincerely



Paul Gayler
Strategic Housing Services Manager
Chelmsford City Council

More information and details on our Just Giving Page

<https://www.chelmsfordcircuit.org.uk/donate/>

One of the areas that we minister to as Hatfield Peverel Methodist Church is our local junior school, and I let them talk me into helping with the garden.

Occasionally, something happens like someone cuts the grass (infrequent) or puts down weedkiller (unsure why?). Generally, it is left to me to plant up, change the design, sweep up leaves, put away things the children have used, and make them think of forward planning.

I go there generally for 2 hours a week in term time. Often there are NTAs and small numbers of pupils to interact with, I also did a couple of willow weaving classes with them. The school made clear there is no budget for any of this.

With the discovery of RAAC concrete and the subsequent closure of the school building, it has been a dramatic thing to observe the dispersal of the school to different premises, then the erection of another “portacabin” school in the playground. The rapidity and proficiency of the procedure has been a joy to watch from a distance. The “end of the exile” is on the horizon, but throughout the turmoil, the condemned demountable building inserted about 30 years ago has become the school office and therefore been in biblical terms: the remnant.

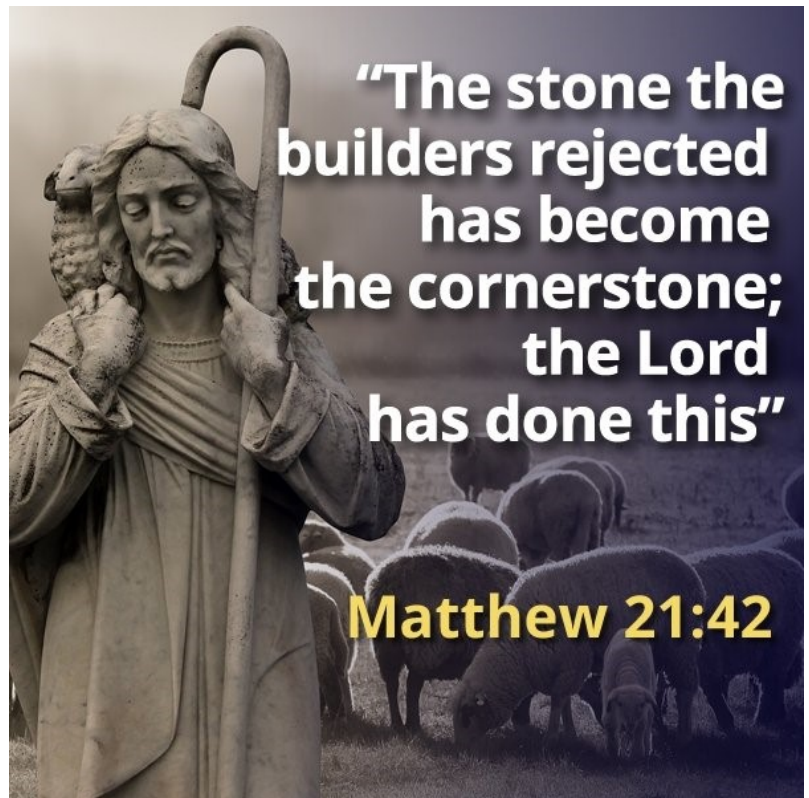
In the words of the head teacher: “the only thing we had left was the building that was condemned first!” calling to mind Sunday’s lectionary: Matt 21:42

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this and it is marvellous in our eyes”

Note: This is taken from Psalm 118, another one that failed to make it into STF!

John R Clemo

Hatfield Peverel Methodist Church



For the circuit newsletter

From Halstead

On a memorable Sunday in August, Halstead Methodist Church was packed full. Extra chairs had to be brought in, and the people kept coming.....

The usual congregation had gathered as always, in their Sunday best and in plenty of time. The noise level started to rise, and the people kept coming – many wearing brilliantly colourful clothes, carrying bags and dishes for a celebratory meal to follow the time of worship.

All this had been arranged by the Lartey family. The singing was loud and joyful, accompanied by various instruments, and there were a number of people involved in leading the worship. Revd Brain preached the Message before dashing off to join his removal van, as he was moving north that day!!

Everyone enjoyed the feast of so many varied dishes afterwards, before going home buzzing with the excitement of the day, and wondering when it could be repeated.

Rev Sue King

Last Sunday I was in a Church I never planned to be in. Swapped over by the people that run it. Should have been in Kelvedon but swapped into Bocking where I had never been. The Lord is so very, very clever.

It all went smoothly but 10 minutes from the end I could see a young man outside looking in. He kept looking so I mentioned it while I was speaking. Someone went out to him and after about 5 minutes he came in with her. At the end he came to speak to me. Ex army man. Had been on the streets till recently. Very distressed. Crying. Very close to breaking down. Just got a job. I said I would pray with him and I did. While I was praying the distress stopped and a deep noticeable peace came upon him and within him. As I left he was relaxed and smiling and chatting with a couple of the members of the church.

I think I was meant to be there. Meant to meet him and for him to meet Him who is Peace.

God can make a way and will use us. Be ready. Be willing. Be used by Him to help those we meet.

Every Blessing and love.

Mike Shelbourne

TRINITY METHODIST 'TOWARDS ONE WORLD ' PROJECT

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Working together with Kenya Thriving organisation we intend to install solar power to provide electricity to five children's houses that make up an orphanage in Kenya.



To give some background to this initiative Kenya Thriving led by Ken Hart have their vision to provide holistic care for 52 orphan children who live in 5 houses. The mothers who care for these children work together to cook for all the children on a stove that is fuelled only by firewood.

Until a few weeks ago they fetched water from the river and never had electricity. They now have a well.

The benefit of installing Solar power to generate electricity will mean they can read and do homework in the evenings without straining their eyes. They will no longer be sitting in darkness from 7 pm each evening.

The ladies who work in the kitchen to make food for the children will have light to see better as food is prepared. In addition, a solar powered fridge and freezer will drastically revolutionise the way they plan meals.

Would you consider donating to this project?

Trinity aims to raise £5,000 needed for this project in the next three years.

Your contributions will make a vast difference to these children!

Thank you so much.

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/kenyaorphanage>

Make a Difference ... Become a Co-Chair of Methodist Women in Britain

We are Methodist Women in Britain, a charity whose focus is for women, for justice and for Christ. We are looking to recruit a new Co-Chair to work in tandem with the present Co-Chair, Maggie Woods.

As Co-Chair of the Charity, you will be a representative for Methodist Women in Britain and the Methodist Church. Currently the work is shared on a predominantly North/South basis, but this is open to negotiation. There will also be an opportunity to have an overseas visit during your term of office. The role brings many wide-ranging opportunities to engage with people inside and outside the Methodist Church. You will have the support of other Trustees, the Executive Team, and a network of local Methodist women to help you guide and shape the future direction of the movement.

So, if you are passionate about :

- creating a fairer world for women and girls
- social action and fighting injustice.
- encouraging others in their walk with Christ

then we want to hear from you.

Prior experience of Methodist Women in Britain is not essential, as you will be able to shadow one of the present Co-Chairs before you take up office in September 2024. You will need to be comfortable with public speaking and have good communication, organisational and IT skills. Experience of chairing meetings and leading worship will be an advantage.

This is a volunteer position with reasonable expenses reimbursed.

Could God be calling you to apply for this exciting role starting in September 2024?

If you would like further information or would like to arrange an informal chat about the role, please contact thepresident.mwib@gmail.com.

Closing Date – Friday 5th January 2024

THE FALLING MAN

written by: Stephen Kingsnorth



When there's no choice,
but die or die,
but only space
for how to die,
by flame or fly,
by burning slow, or diving death,
a lonely place, not if or why,
but stay in pain,
or quicker fall –
what is the choice when none at all?
To celebrate as heroes, should,
but brush away the harshest day –
that falling man had had his day –
remain in hell, or fly away.
You look away?
It's for the man, not you I say:
the unknown soldier
in the air
as life laid down,
the falling man.

Stephen Kingsnorth, retired to Wales, UK from ministry in the Methodist Church with Parkinson's Disease, has had some 300 pieces published by on-line poetry sites, printed journals and anthologies.

Thanks to Mike Fogg for contributing this article.



ST AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY CHURCH
NORTH SPRINGFIELD LOCAL ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP (LEP)
40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



On 3rd October the four denominations (Anglican, Methodist, URC and Roman Catholic) came together for a service of celebration to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the opening of the church and to look forward to the future.

As long ago as the mid-1970s representatives of the four denominations and the Baptist church met to explore the possibility of an ecumenical venture in the rapidly developing area of North Springfield. This became known as the Ginger Group and met over several years to develop the proposal.

In 1979 Revd. Oswald (Ossie) Trellis was licensed as the Anglican Priest with pastoral responsibility for URC and Methodists. As there was no church building services were generally held at Revd Ossie's house in North Springfield. By the early 1980s the Bishops of Brentwood and Chelmsford together with representatives of the Methodist and URC churches proposed that the building to be constructed became a shared church.

And so it was that in May 1983 the shared church, St Augustine of Canterbury, opened its doors for its first Roman Catholic and Anglican/Methodist/URC services. On 3rd June 1983 the building was dedicated by representatives of all four churches.

By the very nature of an LEP with different Christian traditions coming together there have been a number of ups and downs but we have learnt over the last forty years to resolve disagreements through discussion and where possible through compromise. It was in that spirit that the joint service of celebration was held and proved to be a most joyous occasion.

A warm welcome was extended to all by the current parish priests at St Augustine's, Revd. Caroline Brown and Fr Martin Hardy. The service was led by Rt. Revd. Alan Williams, Roman Catholic Bishop of Brentwood; the sermon was given by Rt. Revd. Laurie Green, retired Anglican Bishop of Bradwell. Val Jellows, current churchwarden who also read at the first ever service forty years ago, read the New Testament lesson and Revd. Mark Pengelly read the Gospel lesson. Prayers of Intercession were said by Revd. Dr. David Chapman, Chair of Beds, Essex and Herts District, Methodist Church, and Revd. David Coaker, Eastern Synod Clerk and Minister of Grays United Reformed Church.

Continued/...



We were privileged to have two local school choirs from the Bishops Primary School and New Hall Secondary School who sang a selection of celebratory songs as well as joining with the joint church choir and musicians of St. Augustine's to lead the singing of congregational hymns.

In his sermon Revd. Laurie Green spoke about the importance of acknowledging our shared faith in

Jesus and the common purpose of seeking grace and guidance. He recalled the time the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, prayed with Pope John Paul II in Canterbury Cathedral. The bishop's cope that Robert Runcie wore that day was later given to Laurie Green who chose to wear it at the shared celebration service.

After prayers were said both bishops blessed the anointing oil and distributed it to the other clergy present who then went to a designated station. Many members of the congregation then went forward to one of the stations to be anointed on the hand in order to receive commissioning for the future as disciples in Christ. At the end of the service it was a moving sight to see the two bishops standing side by side in their robes and mitres giving a joint blessing from the altar to the assembled worshippers.

After the service friends, past and present were able to chat and enjoy some beautifully prepared canapes and a glass of wine. All the catering was prepared by a member of the Roman Catholic community including a magnificent iced fruit cake with an image of St Augustine painted on to it. The Deputy Lady Mayor, Cllr Jude Deakin, gave a short speech before cutting the cake.

It was good to see so many former priests and ministers including Revd. Ossie Trellis forty years after he officiated at the first ever service at St Augustine's. This truly was a very special service of celebration which will remain long in the memory of those who were present.

Douglas Hayton



'Trauma Teddies'

Hello everyone!

Some of you will know that alongside being **Circuit Safeguarding Officer** I also work in quite a few Essex Schools.



For this article I wanted to take a little bit of time to share with you the work I do and to ask for your **help** with a project I am working on at the moment.

In School I am known as a **Therapeutic Mentor**. I work with individual children and small groups to support them in their wellbeing. What this means is that I give them a safe, fun space where they can feel heard, have fun, be noticed and have a space to share anything that might be going on for them. Sometimes this includes hearing some quite difficult disclosures and then following the school's safeguarding procedures to ensure that the child gets the right level of support and remains safe. This also may entail working with their key adults too, parents/carers/ teachers/ support staff and multi agency professionals etc.

One of the *difficult* parts of this role is being part of the support team when a child goes into the care of the council, also known as *foster care*. However, something that has brought many children comfort is having something that has been handmade for them to take with them when they go to their new home.

So, with this in mind I would like to introduce you to the project of '**Trauma Teddies**'. These are small little bears, often quite colourful and always cuddly, which are given out usually by emergency service personnel to children at the time of a serious incident.

However, in my experience, there is a much wider group of vulnerable children who would greatly benefit from having one of these, who do not meet the emergency services who would give them one. I would really like to be able to give the children I work with one of these handmade (with **love**, prayers and wool!!) teddies.

If you like to knit or crochet and would like to help me provide one of these teddies to a vulnerable child then I would love to hear from you!! I can provide you with a pattern, unless you want to find your own, and am happy to reimburse you for the cost of materials used (I just need the receipt!). Any questions please do get in touch.



Thank you!

Esther

Teddies: esther@goneforaburton.net
All things safeguarding:
safeguarding@chelmsfordcircuit.org

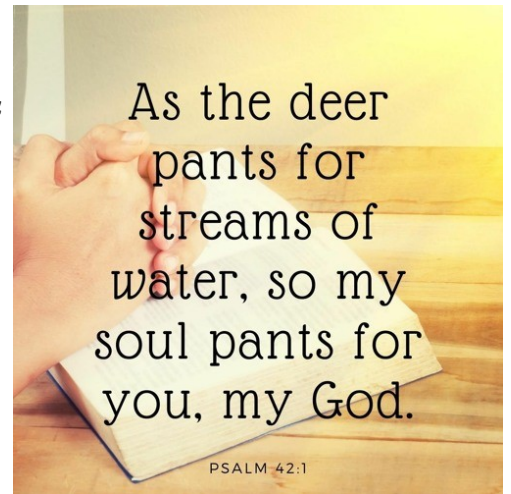
As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go & meet with God?

My tears have been my food day & night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One, with shouts of joy & praise among the festive throng.

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior & my God.

Psalm 42:1-5.



Dear Friends

*Where is God when our life is in tatters & it feels as though He's nowhere to be found? Where is God? He's front & centre of our desperate longing to find Him! A longing which He, Himself, has consciously set in motion. To what end? That we might so seek after Him that, eventually, we discover ourselves to be more full of Him, than we are of ourselves. Because the more of Him there is in us, the happier, more complete, more useful to Him we will be! As Pastor Max Lucado puts it - **'There is nothing more on earth that can satisfy our deepest longing. We long to see God. The leaves of life are rustling with the rumour that we will & won't be satisfied until we do.'***

*Even in the midst of our darkest trials, where our sense of urgency for the presence of God seems more heightened than ever, there'll be no lack of the Spirit's encouragement. As our oldest daughter, Hannah, came recently to discover the day she received the following text message from one Jude's carers. I.e. The morning the first of two complex operations on both arms, (rendered useless as a result of his paralysis), was due to take place - **'Good morning Hannah, thanks for keeping me in the loop. My church group members have taken it upon themselves to fast & pray for Jude. I have the assurance in God that all will go well. Be encouraged Hannah. Help give Jude loads of love, hugs & kisses. Xx From Aunt Mary - carer.'** Xx*

*Not long after that, the very same lady invited Hannah to go with her to her local Baptist church, where the mother of one of Jude's closest friends, was getting baptised. By all accounts it was an amazing service. Not least of all because of the celebrity style welcome Jude received upon his arrival & the prayers, hard on the back of such a welcome, which followed. Nb. We are never more near to the hour of God's break through deliverance, than when darkness appears to be @ it's most intense. Never closer to the dawn of a new day of divinely inspired blessing, than when the battle is @ it's most fierce. As Pope Francis helpfully puts it - **'The night is @ it's darkest just before dawn breaks, just before the light emerges; in the darkest moment, God intervenes & resurrects.'***

*With love from us all here @ Christ Church,
John Prothero.*

Many thanks for all those who have supported the Circuit Newsletter by sending in articles and sharing the newsletter with colleagues, friends and family.

I really appreciate your support.

Karen



Future Dates for our Circuit Meeting

Thursday 22nd February 2024

Coggeshall

Wednesday 15th May 2024

Witham

7.15pm for 7.30pm

Circuit Administrator: Karen Murrell.

Email: karen.murrell@chelmsfordcircuit.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/chelmsfordcircuit>

<http://www.chelmsfordcircuit.co.uk>

'Share your news'

Deadline for
January & February
to Karen by

Mid December at latest.