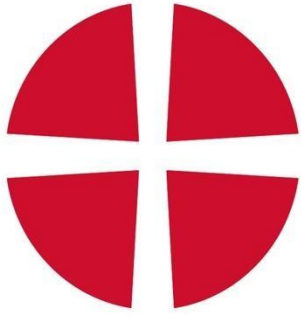
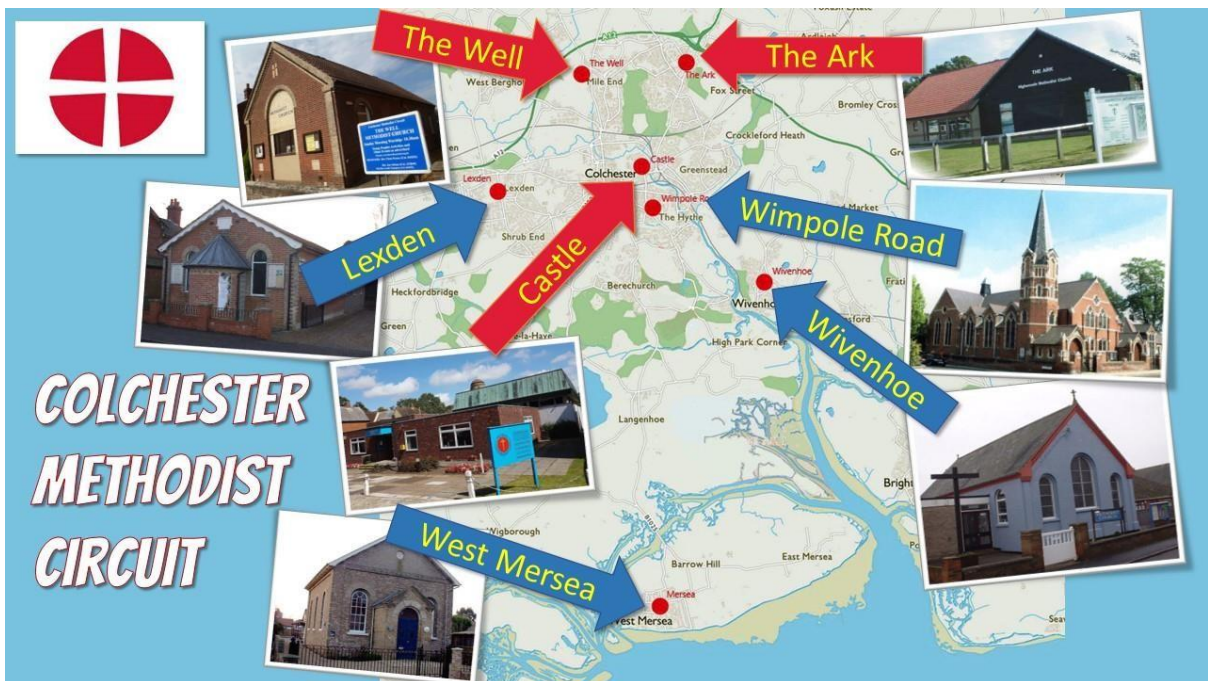




Colchester Methodist Circuit

Newsletter

Edition 12 – Winter 2025 (redacted version)



Letter from our Superintendent, Rev Chris Preece

Dear Friends,

A few weeks ago, I was introduced to the Thameslink Railway advert at a meeting I was attending. The strapline of the advert is that 'every stop is a story.' This doesn't have to only apply to train travel but could be to do with many different forms of transport, including walking and cycling as well. It may be a specific event, an annual holiday somewhere or a visit to someone, either family or friend. There are so many ways in which this could be interpreted physically in relation to particular journeys.

Of course, we can also relate this strapline to our spiritual lives as well. Every time we stop to pray, we have a story to tell God. We can meet Jesus and rest in his presence and reflect on the story of the day or season of our life. This newsletter spans the Advent season, Christmas, and then moves

into 2026 when we renew our Covenant with God. These are all significant stops along the way. They are times to think about the story of anticipation and waiting ahead of the celebration of Jesus' birth. In January, as we think about the commitment we make to God through the Covenant prayer, it is a time to stop and intentionally reflect on our relationship with God.

The run up to Christmas is a busy time for everyone. It is also a time where it is often easier to engage with people who don't have a church background and share something of the real message of Christmas. Can this be a time where other people are encouraged to stop and reflect? It might be an opportunity to make a stop along the journey of life and find the story of God, revealed in Jesus.

Within this newsletter there will be the news from the Circuit and the churches. It is a stop on the journey of the Circuit. We are sharing the story of what we believe God is asking us to share with others so more people may come to know him for themselves, and this is one of the stops we have to share with one another as we continue to work together.

As we read this newsletter, I encourage us to stop and pray for each of the churches, Jastine's work as our Anna Chaplain and the life of the Circuit. I would also encourage us all through this season, to stop and reflect on our own journey with God thinking about the significance to our faith of Christmas and then when we share in our Covenant services.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and may I take this opportunity to wish you and your families all the best for this Advent and Christmas seasons.

God bless,
Chris



NEWS: from The Circuit

Anna Chaplain

JASTINE Diaz has started his work as the Circuit's Anna Chaplain lay worker and following a period of introduction and training, he looks forward to a busy Christmas with the care homes with whom he has already made links. He writes:

"Dear Friends,

As we enter the Christmas season, plans are under way for our Christmas Carols in local care homes during the first two weeks of December. These visits are such a blessing bringing comfort, joy, and a sense of connection to residents at this special time of year.

We're also delighted to share some wonderful news: **Horkesley Manor has now joined our list of care homes!** What a wonderful opportunity for us as a circuit to extend God's love even further, to even more people who may deeply need encouragement, companionship, and a reminder that they are not forgotten.

We warmly encourage everyone to consider taking part. Even giving just one afternoon can lift spirits, spark memories, and make a profound difference to someone's day. You don't need to be a confident singer or commit to every visit; your presence alone can be a blessing. Come as you are, for as many or as few sessions as you can manage.

Let's come together to make this Christmas a season of hope, warmth, and community for our neighbours in care.

With every blessing,
Jastine"

Here is a schedule of Jastine's Christmas carol events:

 Colchester
Methodist Circuit

COME AND JOIN US!

**CHRISTMAS CAROLS
AT LOCAL
CARE HOMES**

Woodland View Care Home – 2:00 PM – 2nd Dec

Tall Trees Care Home – 3:00 PM – 9th Dec

NEWLY ADDED! Horkesley Manor – 1:45 PM – 10th Dec NEWLY ADDED!

Springfields Residential & Nursing Home – 1:45 PM – 12th Dec

Foxburrow Grange Care Home – 1:45 PM – 15th Dec

Alderwood Care Home – 3:00 PM – 16th Dec

To reserve your spot, get in touch with:

Jastine Diaz

☎ 07836 394364

✉ colchestermethodist.ac@gmail.com



Please continue to pray for Jastine's work as our Anna Chaplain.

We give thanks to God for:

- The visits to churches and the positive initial engagement
- Visits to care homes and the interest shown
- The Anna Chaplain Support Group
- The unexpected moments of people getting in touch who are keen to hear more

We pray for:

- The upcoming Carols in Care Homes that the joy and message of Christmas is shared in new places
- The ongoing relationship with Care Homes and the establishment of a regular programme
- Energy and wisdom for Jastine
- Guidance for the future direction of this work

Circuit prayer requests

Our Superintendent Minister has reminded us of the considerations to be met when sharing prayer requests around the Circuit.

She says:

'It is always good to pray and there may be specific times where a serious prayer request needs to be shared across the Circuit and not just within the local church. Where this is the case, please can the following guidelines be adhered to:

1. People's names and situations can only be disclosed as part of a prayer request where express permission has been gained in advance.
2. Only a person's first name can be shared.
3. Please do not share sensitive information.
4. A prayer request should be brief.

When a prayer request is being made, please pass this to the minister and the Circuit Administrator in the first instance who will then have a conversation prior to any wider circulation taking place.

1. Prayer requests will be circulated to Senior Stewards in the churches by the Circuit Administrator.
2. Senior Stewards are then to consider carefully the best persons or groups within the church with whom to share the prayer request. This may include a church prayer group, Minister, Local Preacher/Worship Leader for the upcoming Sunday or within church notices for personal intercession. (Where a service is being livestreamed or otherwise recorded, then special attention needs to be paid as to whether it is appropriate to include within Sunday intercessions).
3. Ensure that no prayer request is shared on any church websites, social media or any other outward public platform.'

from Lexden:

ALTHOUGH we have one of the smallest congregations in the circuit, we, like the other churches, maintain a close contact with our members who are no longer able to attend our Sunday services.

WE have recently been collecting items for the shoebox appeal and were surprised by the number we were able to fill. A big thanks go to all who gave, also for the cash donations received.

WE continue to hold a prayer and reflective half hour every Thursday morning from 9.30 to 10. Everyone is welcome to join us.

ON Sunday 16th November we celebrated 166 years at Lexden and we were pleased that Rev Paul and his family were able to join us.

WE will be holding our Carol service on 21st December so if anyone wants to join us, they will be made very welcome.

from Castle:

OUR Wednesday Open House restarted at the beginning of September. It has been good to welcome friends old and new, who drop in for refreshments and fellowship. Members of our Church Family also appreciate the opportunity to meet in this social setting, where they can support and encourage each other. As the days get colder, the soup will be greatly appreciated.

AT our Harvest celebrations this year, we celebrated Holy Communion during the service, this truly added to the meaning of God's good gifts to us all. Thirty people sat down and enjoyed a sumptuous buffet lunch and a great time of fellowship. We also managed to exceed the 100kg target of donations for the Colchester Foodbank.

WHAT a joy it was to have our Church Anniversary worship led by Rev Robin and members of our Junior Church. They led us with Prayers, Bible readings and song, with one young lady who is currently studying for her A levels sharing with us her Testimony. The service was followed with a picnic lunch and games; the curling was very popular.

REV Chris and Rev Robin are now leading a monthly study group with the teenagers of our junior Church, as the young people continue their Christian journey.

With Advent very much upon us, we have our plans in place:

Sunday 7th December - Gift Service. We will be collecting gifts for the young people being supported by The Bridgeway charity.

Wednesday 10th - Carols in the Park, by the Castle entrance, 4-5pm. All welcome.

Thursday 11th - 2.30pm onwards, Carols and Cake, bring a friend.

Sunday 21st - 10.30am. Carol Service, followed by coffee and mince pies.

Thursday 25th - 10.30am. Christmas day sector service at Castle, all welcome.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year, to all our friends across the Colchester Methodist Circuit, from all the Castle Church Family.

from The Ark:

THE Ark continues to be well used by many groups serving the various needs of the community of Highwoods, in addition to Home Start and the Food Bank (Highwoods branch) which use our building as their permanent base.

MAINTENANCE and repair continues apace and a new industrial dishwasher has been purchased for the kitchen to replace the old machine which has come to the end of its working life.

OUR Sunday services are well attended and we are delighted to be joined regularly by young families and their babies.

WE said a fond farewell and thankyou to one of our long standing and loyal members, Daphne, who died in October. A service of thanksgiving and celebration of her long, adventure-filled life was held at The Ark, which was packed with her friends and family. Daphne brought such joy to so many people in her life and she will be sadly missed.

WE were delighted to be led by Joe in his Number 2 (Army) uniform for our Remembrance Sunday service.

AS we move through Advent the banners which adorn the internal walls at the Ark have been changed from their summer display and our outdoor banner wishing all a peaceful Christmas is in place near the entrance. The Advent services will include two arranged by our own members and our carol service supported by our in-house musicians and friends - The Arkestra – will take place on 14th December.

BEFORE that, two large groups of children and their teachers from Brinkley Grove Primary School will be welcomed to the Ark for Christingle services in the afternoon of 8th December.

WE look forward to joining our friends at Castle on Christmas Day and with the rest of the Circuit at Wimpole Road on 28th December.

Happy Christmas everyone, from all at The Ark.

from Wimpole Road:

AS detailed in the previous Circuit Newsletter, Wimpole Road has undergone some much-needed improvements, mainly at the back of the church where our new kitchenette has been installed. Other significant changes have been made to the vestibule and vestry as well as installing a fully accessible toilet.

The Remembrance Sunday service led by Rev Hannah incorporated a dedication of these facilities, which were part funded by two generous donations given in memory of former much-loved church members.

We at Wimpole Road are indebted to the Colchester Circuit for their invaluable grant, which has enabled our renovation project to come into fruition. We were able to conform to the current Church Mission Plan as well as fulfilling our own mission objectives: mainly to maintain our status as a warm and welcoming church and to encourage new members of the congregation to feel welcome, identify their needs and give them the opportunity to become more involved. Therefore by moving the

Sunday coffee into the main church building, this will greatly enhance the fellowship shared after the service.

The Circuit Service on Sunday 28th December, will provide an opportunity for you all to experience the changes in person, where a warm welcome is guaranteed.

HOWEVER, if you can't wait that long, why not come to our Family Carol Service at 6.30p.m. on Sunday 21st December where Boxted Silver Band will be playing. This is a United Service with St. Stephen's Church, but everyone is welcome.

from The Well:

THE Building Project: In an earlier Newsletter it was reported that we had submitted a 'preliminary enquiry application' of our building plans to Colchester City Council. We received their feedback, and, though the scheme was viewed positively in most areas, there was a desire for some of the Victorian features to remain at the front of the building. Our architect has drawn up new plans which have taken on board the comments, and we are in the process of finalising it for submission to Colchester City Council for full planning permission.

ON 23rd November we had our Caring Service when Souzan from Bridgeway Mission was our speaker. We collected toiletries and baby clothes for Bridgeway, and, good quality second-hand towels for Colchester Engagement and Next Steps (Night Shelter).

IT may well be advertised elsewhere, but this is a reminder that our Christmas Fayre is on Saturday 6th December in the hall from 2 - 4pm. Entry is free and there will be children's activities, various stalls and refreshments.

AS part of Churches Together in Myland, Chesterwell Co-op has given permission for us to sing Christmas Carols outside the store on Friday 13th December at 6.30pm with members of Boxted Silver Band providing the music. We will be collecting donations for East Anglia's Children's Hospices. Mersea Homes are keen to be involved and will film some of the singing for their Christmas promotion. Do come and join us if you would like to.

WE wish all our Circuit friends a peaceful Christmas and a blessed New Year.

from Wivenhoe:

AS an ageing and infirm congregation we find it increasingly difficult to fill the various posts required to run the Church. This is exacerbated by the demands to maintain and run an old building without an appointed Property Secretary. However, we still maintain a loving and caring place of worship and service, with Sunday worship attended by between 20 and 30 people each week, including visitors and new faces.

A MONTHLY bible study has begun, led by Rev Hannah Chun.

WE will hold our annual Christmas Gift Service on Sunday 7th December.

THE Boxted Methodist Silver Band recently asked to hold a band service in memory of Joe. This took place on Sunday 12th October. With our Church not being big enough to hold the band and those wishing to attend, St Mary's kindly agreed to host it. And Rev Erwin Lammens agreed to

preach. It was indeed well attended; the band were excellent. Joe was fondly remembered and God was worshipped in word, song and spirit.

OUR involvement with, and commitment to, 'Churches Together in Wivenhoe' continues. Recently we took part in the Service of Remembrance and wreath laying – always very well attended by people in the town. The Christmas Card outlining all Wivenhoe Churches' Advent and Christmas activities has been designed, printed and will be delivered to every household shortly. Carols on the Quay is again arranged for Sunday 21st December at 6pm.

FINALLY, Wivenhoe wishes everyone in the Circuit a happy and peaceful Christmas. May we all be renewed by the celebration of God's love revealed by the birth of his Son, our Saviour.

from West Mersea:

OUR Community Coffee/Lunch meetings have continued throughout the Summer and Autumn and we are now back to our Warm Spaces venture on Wednesdays from 10am until 2pm. It is a joy to welcome our guests who week by week share some of their life stories with us. For some it is their only contact with others as they do not have any close family.

OUR Baby and Toddler group continues to flourish as we meet on Thursdays from 9am until 11.30am. It is good to see how well they look forward to meeting up and having a chat with each other.

Friendships are made as children meet up with those they will start school with. New mums are reassured by those with older children, with grandparents keen to give advice!

WE held our Harvest Weekend in October with a Harvest Supper on Saturday evening for our church family with support from our friends in the Circuit, followed by a musical evening involving our newly-formed singing group, which was both entertaining and great fun! On Sunday, our Harvest service was taken by Rev Hannah which was well received. We were asked to bring dry goods for the "Mersea Pantry" which is an island charity supported by Mersea residents.

WE have already started planning for next year's Beach Club alongside other Mersea churches, following a very successful one this year when we hosted 174 children and their parents and carers during the week.

DURING our Autumn Church Council there was much discussion about our hopes and plans for our onward journey of service to our community as we reflect on the Circuit Vision Statement, which is to be a diverse, outward-looking community where people grow in faith and share what it means to walk with Jesus, through word, action, and prayer. We have added our own statement whilst "Learning, Loving, Living for Christ".

WE hope that as you travel through the Advent season you will find peace and joy in the services of which you are a part.

All that remains for us on Mersea is to wish each and every one of you a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

FROM THE CIRCUIT DIARY:

**Please see the poster below and the Circuit plan for details
of Christmas services and events**

30 th November	Anna Chaplaincy commissioning service for Jastine Diaz at Castle from 3pm
2 nd December	Circuit Meeting on Zoom from 7pm
13 th December	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at The Ark from 9am (dates for 2026 will be circulated in due course)
28 th December	Circuit Service at Wimpole Road from 11am
8 th January	Next Circuit Grants application deadline

In addition.....

Circuit Evening 'Zoom' services take place on 1st, 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month from 6:30pm

Circuit Bible Study takes place on many Tuesday evenings throughout the year (via Zoom)

All are very welcome and further information on any of the above is available;

From our Circuit Administrator at colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com

By viewing the Circuit diary at <https://colchestermethodists.org.uk>

DEADLINES

Please submit your plan requests for Mar/Apr/May by 15th January via our Circuit Administrator at colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com

The next newsletter will be distributed at the beginning of March so please let Judith have your church news by 16th February.




The Methodist Church

Colchester Methodist Circuit

Please join us during December as we celebrate Christmas

3 rd	Wimpole Road	12:30pm	A service for Woodlands Day Centre
6 th	The Well	2pm-4pm	Christmas Fayre
10 th	Castle	4pm-5pm	Carols in the Park
11 th	Castle	2:30pm-4pm	Carols & Cake
11 th	Wivenhoe	2:30pm	Knit 'n' Natter/Fellowship Party
12 th	The Well	6:30pm	Carol Singing by Chesterwell Co-Op
14 th	The Ark	10:30am	Carol Service
18 th	Wimpole Road	2:30pm	Thursday Circle Carol Service
21 st	Castle	10:30am	Carol Service
21 st	Lexden	10:30am	Carol Service
21 st	Wivenhoe	11am	Carol Service
21 st	The Well	4pm	Carol Service
21 st	Mersea	4pm	Carol Service
21 st	Wivenhoe	6pm	Carols on the Quay
21 st	Wimpole Road	6:30pm	Carol Service with Boxted Silver Band
24 th	Wimpole Road	4pm	Crib Service with Holy Communion
24 th	Wivenhoe	7:30pm	Holy Communion Service
25 th	Mersea	10am	Christmas Service
25 th	Castle	10:30am	Christmas Service
28 th	Wimpole Road	11am	Circuit Service

Further information is available from our Circuit Administrator

via 07796 077736 or at colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com