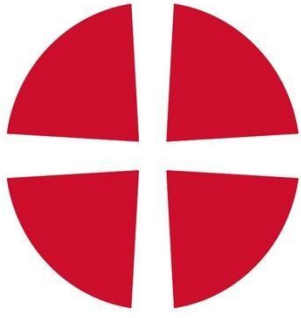
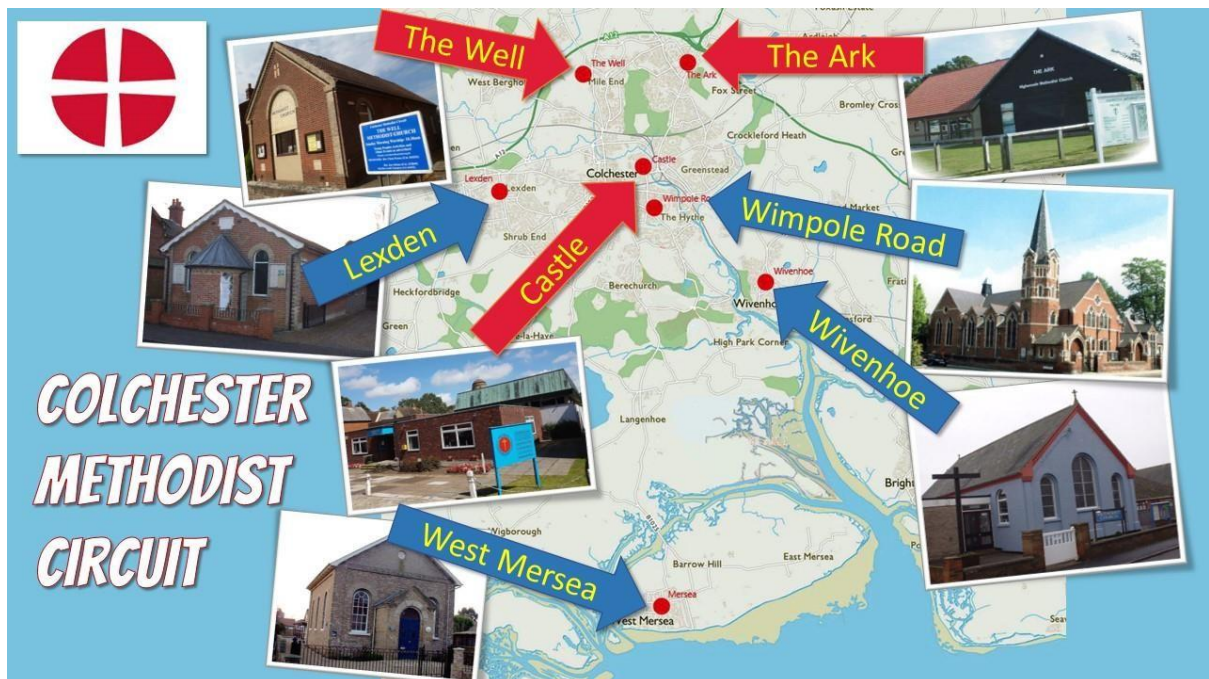




Colchester Methodist Circuit

Newsletter

Edition 15 – Autumn 2026 (redacted)



Letter from our Superintendent, Rev Chris Preece

Dear Friends,

September 1st marks the start of the new Connexional or church year and it also signals the official start of the meteorological Autumn. As we know the weather through July and August has been exceptionally dry and hot. Yet, as I look out of the window, I see a tree in a neighbour's garden very much doing an impression of late Autumn with its leaves dropping. There are other signs of Autumn as well with fruit dropping from the trees and the harvest has been gathered in, in practical terms, for quite some time.

The start of a new church or academic year, in combination with an early Autumn makes us realise that as some things start up again, others are moving towards more of a 'closing down' at the end of the season type phase. In and through it all, God is with us and we can rejoice in and through this.

As we reflect through this newsletter on the life of the churches within the Circuit, we give thanks to God for all that has happened. We will read of some of the things which only happen because it is summer, whilst other things may be starting up again, one way or another. The start of this season will see us celebrate harvest in most of the churches and then, in November, we will share in Remembrance Sunday. It is also the season in church where we celebrate 'creationtide' placing a focus on our care for creation and climate justice. Some of our Zoom services will be taking this as their theme as we seek to raise the profile of our care for God's creation across the Circuit.

Hesed is a Hebrew word which is difficult to translate but which is usually considered to be God's steadfast love and faithfulness. It shows God's grace, compassion and loyalty to God's people. It is often found in the Old Testament and is an expression of God's faithfulness in all the seasons of life. It is also a word which has an active response. It might be difficult to translate but it is a reminder of how God stands actively alongside God's people. Today, as part of our response to the saving love of Christ, we seek for our actions to reflect the love, grace, and compassion of Jesus to others.

As we read this newsletter, I hope we can give thanks to God for all that is happening in and around the Circuit. There is so much good work going on as we seek to live out our lives as disciples. We can see many examples of how the churches seek to stand alongside the people and communities they serve. And it's important to remember we don't do it alone as we seek to follow Jesus and share in God's mission through the leading of the Holy Spirit to the people here in Colchester.

Whatever season we feel we may be in, let's remember that God's *hesed* is there for us all, and Jesus is walking alongside us. I'm going to close with the words of the second verse and chorus from the hymn 'Great is thy faithfulness' which remind us of God's presence who will be with us as we seek to stand alongside others in all the seasons of life:

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

*Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hast provided;
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*

God bless,
Chris



NEWS: from The Circuit

Anna Chaplain – an update from Jastine Diaz



THERE is something special about Harvest, a time to give thanks, share what we have, and gather in joy. This year, we would love the Circuit to help bring that celebration into our local care homes.

Over the coming weeks, we'll be holding Harvest Songs of Praise filled with familiar hymns, thanksgiving and fellowship. We'll also be collecting donations for Colchester Foodbank, giving us an opportunity to celebrate what we have while sharing with those in need.

These gatherings have become much more than services. They are moments when memories are stirred, voices find confidence again, and residents, families, staff and volunteers share something special together. Whether you love to sing, enjoy spending time with older people, or simply want to come along and encourage others, there's a place for you! And don't worry enthusiasm is much more important than perfect pitch!

UPCOMING GATHERINGS DATE & TIME (please contact me for venues)

Mon 7 Sept – 3:00pm Messy Vintage
Tue 8 Sept – 11:15am Harvest Songs of Praise
Wed 9 Sept – 2:00pm Messy Vintage
Fri 11 Sept – 10:30am Messy Vintage
Mon 21 Sept – 10:30am Harvest Songs of Praise
Mon 21 Sept – 3:00pm Coffee Afternoon
Tue 22 Sept – 11:15am Messy Vintage
Wed 23 Sept – 2:00pm Harvest Songs of Praise

COME AND BE PART OF IT

It would be wonderful to see people from across the Circuit joining us this Harvest. Your presence can make a real difference to residents, while helping us share joy, fellowship and faith and support our local community through Colchester Foodbank.

Bring your voice, bring your smile and, if you can, bring a food donation too!

If you would like to volunteer, attend a session, or simply find out more please ring me, Jastine, on 07836394364 or send me an email to colchestermethodist.ac@gmail.com

Thank you for your prayers, encouragement and continued support. Together, we can bring a little more song, joy and hope into our local care homes.

Jastine Diaz

Play safe with group emails

THERE has been recent discussion regarding emails to groups of people which may lead to a breach of data regulations.

Unfortunately, an accidental or inadvertent breach of the rules is not accepted as a defence so great care should be taken when emailing a group of people, especially where there is a possibility that the email could be forwarded on to someone else.

It is the responsibility of the sender of an email to ensure that all addresses which are openly included are those of members who are in the relevant church or circuit directory, for they have consented to the use of their email address for church communication.

If an email which openly includes all recipients' email addresses is forwarded on, there is a risk that personal data (email addresses) will move out of the sphere of church communication and that is when a breach of the data protection regulations will occur.

The safest way to avoid any breach is to BCC (blind carbon copy) all recipients of an email you are sending to a group. This means that no one's email addresses will be on view.

The way to do this is to address an email which is to go to a group to yourself, then click on BCC and enter into that box all the email addresses of the members of the group. No recipient of the email will be able to see the email addresses of the rest of the group.

Judith

ECO corner

We hope this will become a regular slot in our Circuit Newsletter to celebrate what we are doing together in Jesus' name to improve Creation Care and Climate Justice (CCCJ) and to offer up a collective prayer to God about our hopes and concerns.

WE are just recovering from several heatwaves with record breaking temperatures achieved in the months of June, July and August. There is no doubt that climate change is happening throughout the world with the less developed parts of our world feeling the damaging effects the most.

I think, however, that we do have many things to celebrate. It was amazing to hear in the Good News Slot of our June Circuit Meeting what many churches are doing regarding CCCJ. A lot of the Good News was about reducing the carbon footprint of our churches and premises. We are fortunate that grants are available from both the Circuit and the District to help with what can be perceived to be a significant financial cost, to make things better for our climate and world.

We also need to consider how our land or outdoor space can be supportive of nature, so it was a joy to hear about gardens, flowerbeds, bug hotels and bird boxes being made and water butts appearing in our grounds.

We remember with joy what our dearly departed friend, Sue, did to embrace CCCJ at her local church and far beyond. Sue was a person who was not afraid to stand up for the rights of vulnerable people. She cared deeply for all environmental matters. She represented our Circuit at Citizen Colchester which seeks to improve the local environment for all.

It is fitting that The Ark have acknowledged her work and have provided more sustainable plants in the planters that both Sue and her husband cared for.

Let us Pray together.

Dear Lord,

Thank you that you created a world and said this is good.

Thank you that you appointed humans to be Stewards of your good world.

Help us to care for your world better than we are currently doing so we can all share in peaceful loving world embraced by your love.

In the name of Jesus we pray,

Amen

Sally

Tony

AFTER six years at the helm, Tony has stepped down as senior circuit steward. The Circuit is indebted to Tony for all the hard work he has done. He was instrumental in organising three Circuit social events; he encouraged and helped develop small group working at Circuit level, enabling those with a specific interest to join a working group which matches their interest – which in turn led to the development of a new website for the Circuit, among other things. He is leading the Circuit through the current stationing process, having first studied an 84-page Methodist Church protocol to ensure he understood the due process to be followed; and his guidance and managerial skills have been truly appreciated by all those who have worked with him.

Tony remains a very active member of the leadership team at The Ark, and he is the District Grants Secretary. He also remains on hand to promote and encourage the use of technology in churches and is only ever a phone call away.

New steward

Neil, a member at Lexden, has joined the team of Circuit stewards, and is now a member of the leadership team. Further information with regard to which steward will be the Circuit representative for which church will follow in due course.

NEWS: from The Churches

Lexden:

WE are delighted with the interest shown in our collecting shoebox items for 'Link to Hope'. We have a cupboard full of gifts and essentials and a whole stack of shoeboxes ready to be filled. As well as this we have received dozens of knitted blankets which are packed between the boxes during transport and then distributed to the needy at their destination.

We are planning on holding a 'Packing Day' when as many people as possible will join us filling the boxes. We will have tea and coffee and play Christmas music to put us in the mood. Please contact Christine if you are interested in helping.

Castle:

AS we look forward to the start of the new Church year, we welcome the restart of our Church activities and those people who use our building after their summer breaks.

Our group for ladies, Women's Get Together, met monthly in members' gardens between June and August. The opportunity to find shady spots would have been the overriding priority this year. A wonderful time of fellowship was enjoyed by everyone present at these events.

As we move into September, we look forward to welcoming friends old and new to our weekly Open House on Wednesday mornings and our monthly Soup and Snack lunches held on the first Thursday of each month. At this event we enjoy not only a choice of homemade soup and dessert, but also a wonderful time of fellowship with friends.

WE will be celebrating both Harvest and our Church Anniversary on Sunday 4th October. Our worship will be led by Rev Chris and, as in previous years, we will be supporting the work of The Colchester Food bank whose services are sadly very much in demand. Morning worship will be followed by lunch, as we continue to share in fellowship and thank God for Harvest and our Worshipping community.

Our teenagers continue to meet monthly with Rev's Chris & Robin and we also enjoy our quarterly games sessions where young and the young at heart meet together and have lots of fun. We are thrilled that two of the group have both achieved the A level results they required for their chosen studies and universities - we wish them well as they continue in further education.

AT our recent Church Council, we were discussing and planning events and dates for the new quarter leading up to Christmas. A busy time ahead in service to our Lord!

The Ark:

WHEN Ron and Judith married at The Ark in May they asked guests to make a donation to the church in lieu of a wedding gift. Thanks to the generosity of those guests who donated, we are now in a position to buy a new electric piano to replace the instrument which has served us well for more than 25 years but is now past its best! The new piano and glider (which will mean that the piano will no longer have to be lifted on and off a trolley in order to move it) has been ordered and should be in place for dedication at our Harvest Festival service on 6th September.

ALL the lighting in our building has now been replaced with eco-friendlier LED lights, with financial support from Circuit and District grants. The use of a Hive system to control the heating at church remotely has led to a big improvement on our energy consumption and bills because the central heating system is now more tightly controlled.

LENGTHS of voile, which is a very fine fabric, have been purchased in liturgical colours so that the cross which now stands in front of the full-length window in the vestry can be draped with seasonal church colours, currently green.

WE have been approached by neighbouring St Luke's Church to support their proposed Light Walk and Halloween (alternative) event on Highwoods. At the time of writing, more detail is awaited.

NEW tables have been ordered to replace those which have been used at the Ark for church and community-led events for more than 25 years. The old tables are to be gifted to St Stephen's.

FINALLY, we are in the very early stages of exploring a regular social gathering at The Ark for people living with dementia and their carers, following a successful pattern which has been developed by a Methodist Church in Norfolk. A lot of preliminary local research needs to be done, so if anyone has any knowledge of or connections with organisations or groups specialising in dementia care, please let Judith know.

Wimpole Road:

AS I write I am looking at my two sleeping house guests, Dotty and Jargo. They are here for just over two weeks. Had they arrived two weeks early, the Tibetan Terrier and Spanish Water dog (who both belong to my son) could have accompanied me to the pet service led so ably by Jonathan.

The themes of unconditional love, faith and trust were explored through the relationship between pet and owner and God and his Created. I mistakenly announced this was a first for Wimpole Road but have been reliably informed something similar occurred a long time ago.

THERE is no confusion however, that Wimpole Road has hosted an annual holiday club in August for many years (since 1982!) and once again all available spaces have been booked for 2026. We look forward to 30 young people coming along to enjoy fun and games, cutting and sticking, sharing lunch and most importantly learning about the love of God.

THIS year we are using the theme 'Pyramid Rock' to explore and uncover some of the ways God shows his love to us.

PYRAMIDS bring back to me memories of a time spent in Egypt several years ago when an extraordinary heatwave occurred there. Temperatures ranged from 49° to 55°c, ever so slightly warmer than we have been having here!

As we all mop our brows in committee meetings it seems odd that the main item on the agenda is about heating!

We are making some progress as to how we will resolve the issue of freezing cold rooms next winter and have recommendations to make to the next Church Council as to how we might move forward.

As always, property matters need careful and prayerful consideration and as we begin the decision-making process to commit time, energy and a large amount of money, we ask for your prayers, please, in this situation. Thank you.

Christine

The Well:

WE submitted plans to Colchester City Council for full planning permission for our Building Project. Unfortunately we have just heard that our application was refused, which obviously was not what we were hoping for. The grounds for refusal have been particularly around the heritage aspect. The project team have met with the architect, prayed together and considered the various options. Your prayers for God's leadership towards next steps will be greatly appreciated.

WE held a Free Family Summer Fun Afternoon for the local community during the summer holidays. It was a successful event, based on 'The Feeding of the Five Thousand', with various activities and refreshments for families to enjoy in the lovely weather.

MYLAND Churches Together held an open-air service at St Michael's Parish Halls on a Sunday afternoon, August 16th. Four local denominations took part and the churches were well represented. The service was followed by scones, cream and jam. It was a splendid occasion and it was good to be together, united in prayer and praise.

OUR Warm Welcome begins again after the holidays, on September 1st, and our first Community Pantry will be on September 8th. See the church website for details.

IF anyone would like to join us, then the next three, monthly, Charity Coffee Mornings are:

- Saturday 19th September - All We Can
- Saturday 17th October – To be decided
- Saturday 21st November – Samaritan's Purse (Shoe Boxes)

AS always, we are grateful to our Ministers, Local Preachers and Worship Leaders who lead our services, faithfully, week by week.

Wivenhoe:

WE continue to meet regularly for Sunday Worship, Thursday Fellowship, Knit and Natter and Saturday Coffee.

WE have welcomed new people into our regular Sunday worship, and Fellowship events have included presentations on Mission Aviation Fellowship and a strawberry tea. We regularly get over 40 to our monthly Saturday Coffee Morning, which raises funds for the Beacon of Hope charity run by our members Dr Bagamba and family in Bunia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The family were here nearly 20 years ago and became very active members of Wivenhoe Methodist Church before returning to war-torn Bunia. Some of you may remember them.

Betty and I were fortunate to arrange a one-hour video link with the family recently which enabled them and us to catch up with the latest news. In addition to the fighting in the region, which has gone on since before their return, the area is now experiencing an Ebola epidemic which is out of control.

Unfortunately the symptoms for Ebola and malaria are very similar, so people treat their ill families at home for malaria and don't take the necessary precautions. The eldest daughter is now a doctor working at the local hospital treating Ebola victims. This is very stressful and demanding, worsened by the fact that the staff have only received one and a half month's wages in the last 3 months. The second daughter now works in procurement for the charity Samaritans Purse. The son is at University in Kenya with just over a year to go. Their youngest daughter is now 15 and at school, but currently it's the school holiday.

The borders between the DRC and neighbouring countries are closed because of Ebola. So at present Amooti is unable to return home. Banaga is on crutches having had an operation on her leg. Bagamba continues to work for SIL and run the Beacon of Hope charity. He travels one day a week to Bogoro, sometimes staying overnight. Bogoro is where much of the charity work is focussed. There he is involved in Bible teaching and much counselling as many of the children have such great needs.

In Bunia he is a lay Pastor at the local Church and again, people come to him for support and advice. They want him to be a minister there, but despite all he has done he hasn't been to bible college, so is unqualified.

Please remember the family and the people there in your prayers.

Phil

Mersea:

WE have just returned from a family holiday at Mundesley on the north Norfolk coast where we were able to experience the magnificent spectacle of the solar eclipse. We held homemade viewing boxes and marvelled at God's creation.

I remembered an old hymn from Sunday School days, "Summer Suns are glowing over land and sea" written by William Walsham Howe in 1871 and wondered what he would have made of it all.

BEACH Club on Mersea was attended by 175 children during the week, plus parents and carers, so over 500 people were caught up in the theme of Friendship with Jesus, seen through the eyes of the first disciples, the children who came to Jesus, Bartimaeus, Zacchaeus and two on the road to Emmaus.

This involved storytelling, crafts, team games, prayer time, acting and singing. We are already starting to plan next year's Beach Club when we meet in September.

WARM spaces which morphs into Community Coffee in the summer continues each week on Wednesdays from 11am until 2pm. It is lovely to see friendships building up outside of the group as they make plans to meet up apart from the group, especially if they have no close family.

TODDLER group has had a break over the school holidays but we aim to resume it in September.

WE have officially entered the digital age as the church has been given a projector! If any visiting preacher would like to project some images or words during their service please let us know in advance and bring them on a memory stick so that they can be projected on to the blank wall behind the pulpit.

OVER the summer we have had some repair work done to our walkway at the side of the church, as there was a need to replace quite a bit of wood and repaint it.

DURING the weekend of October 10th and 11th it will be our harvest festival. There will be a harvest supper on the Saturday where there will be entertainment by our newly formed "Paws for Singing" group. So please come along and enjoy food and a singalong. Further details will be publicised nearer the time.

Ann

FROM THE CIRCUIT DIARY:

2 nd September	Circuit Meeting at Mersea from 7:30pm
19 th September	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at The Ark from 9am
10 th October	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at Wivenhoe from 9am
29 th October	Advanced Safeguarding training at Castle from 10am
7 th November	Foundation Safeguarding training at The Ark from 9:30am
14 th November	Circuit Monthly Prayer Meeting at Wimpole Road from 9am
30 th November	Circuit Meeting on Zoom from 7pm

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 Dec/Jan/Feb by 15th October via our Circuit Administrator at colchestermethodist.office@gmail.com

The next newsletter will be distributed at the beginning of December so please let Judith have your church news by 23rd November.