



Chelmsford Circuit

Issue 34

Newsletter Date: Jan & Feb 2025

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL



**Whatever you are seeking here, we pray you will
find the reality of God's love in Jesus in your life.**

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



The **Methodist** Church 



In Keeping with Tradition - Reflecting on Christmas in the New Year

One of the things that many people cherish about Christmas is that sense of maintaining and continuing of cherished and well-loved traditions. Perhaps one of the areas where that is most keenly felt is in the singing of Christmas Carols. However, despite the protests from liturgical purists that no Christmas Carols should be sung before Christmas day, the truth is that 95% of our Christmas celebrations happen during advent! I've heard of a number of clergy come a cropper in their enthusiasm to 'educate' their congregations of the fact that Advent and Christmas should not be confused! Not singing Christmas Carols at Carol services, which in most Churches happen before Christmas, is in my opinion playing with fire, for as is revealed, there is an elasticity to our traditions. The Church needs to be more mindful of this I suggest.

I was reminded of this when I came across a YouTube video by Paul Field, one of my favourite contemporary Christian singer songwriters. He had changed the words in some verses of one of my favourite carols: **In the Bleak Midwinter—Paul Field.**

In the bleak midwinter
frosty wind made moan
The earth stood hard as iron
water like a stone
Snow had fallen snow on snow
snow on snow
In the Bleak midwinter long ago

*In the bleak midwinter
the hungry and the poor
Still wait for their Messiah
to end prejudice and war
For still we fight each other
still our children die
If the Prince of peace has come to us
why won't the white dove fly?*

*In the bleak midwinter
this fragile planet turns
But through all the years of history
still love seems hard to learn
How can we make a difference
turn darkness into light
In the bleak midwinter
here tonight*

What can I give Him
poor as I am
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb
If I were a wise man
I would do my part
Yet what I have I give Him
give my heart

Paul Field is not alone in this endeavour. Methodism produced its latest hymnbook 'Singing the Faith' in 2013 and there are any number of changes to lines in Carols there. Sacrilege I hear you say? Well, maybe not, for the truth is the words of hymns across the ages have always been adapted and changed according to the needs of the time.



The Methodist Christmas Campaign - 'Hush the Noise' - which runs through into the Epiphany and New Year, focuses on the hymn 'It Came Upon a Midnight Clear'. This most traditional of hymns has some radical origins: It was written in America in 1849 as a response to geopolitical unrest, and as a protest about the horrors of slavery. It describes a “weary world” filled with “Babel sounds”, “sin and strife” and war.

As it's now 2025 and the New Year you might be thinking it's time to 'move on from Christmas'. It seems to me we need to stick with Christmas for as long as possible, certainly beyond Boxing Day! Those who've had their 'decs' up since the beginning of November will be glad to putting them away perhaps, but the radical Christmas message must not be put 'back into the box' with our baubles and tinsel. Sadly, 175 years after 'It Came Upon...' was written, the carol is just as relevant for now as we lament the trouble of our day. As Paul Field powerfully articulates, we need to rephrase the need for harmony, justice and restoration for our New Year as well as Christmas.

New Year blessings, Mark



Hi Friends,

It is said that the first 100 days in a new appointment is a crucial time in the life of a minister. I must say as I am writing this newsletter, it is exactly 100 days since I joined the Trinity and the Chelmsford Circuit. Many will be keen to know how the past 100 days have been for me. These early days have inevitably been filled with prudent listening, learning and loving. The best initiative I could have spearheaded was my Listening Campaign, to take the pulse of where Trinity Church currently is.



I was given a spreadsheet to make sure I have touched base with most, and the Trinity house groups in different localities. I would like to emphasise, sharing your thoughts and listening, helps to discern what the next best steps for this church might be. My Listening Campaign was and is an ongoing practice. The best piece of advice I got in theological seminary was this: “When you arrive at your new

The best piece of advice I got in theological seminary was this:

“When you arrive at your new Church, take the time to read the minutes. All of them!”

Church, take the time to read the minutes. All of them.” When I first heard this in the class I thought it was a joke. I thought ministers do not have enough time for reading old minutes, however this practice has been very helpful.

Every Church is founded as a mission. Whether or not the Church is innovative now, it was in the beginning. When I started at Trinity on the 1st of September 2024, I found there are many groups and committees discussing the same topics and sharing the same opinions. This was causing many to feel worn-out. I think it would be beneficial if we had a meeting with a larger group of people, as we are an elderly congregation, it would make things more efficient and generate more creative answers.

I would like to honour our elderly members and express my duty of care to them by freeing them to enjoy worship to the full extent. They should not have to worry about smaller things such as are the mics working? Are the slides being displayed on the projector correctly? For me the elderly members are the new legends of the old legacy of the Trinity Church. They are a strong link and a blessed bridge between Baby Boomers to Generation Alpha. They are skilled and seasoned to inspire reaching out to new people if not physically then through regular prayers. The old age is true and treasured.

People generally won't learn from someone they don't like. When a minister takes job in a new large Church, it's important to think about how they can build relationships with every member and vice versa. Every Church has a likeability factor that seems unteachable but it's about using it to our advantage. **If you are able to build relationships, you can share your heart and Church experiences with others and build connections.**



Improving communication, enables everyone to understand the Church vision and feel well informed on weekly basis because we are becoming forgetful. Since I have been in Britian, stationing and moving is a tiring episode. When the time comes to start a new initiative and services, telling the same old stories but finding a way to make it refresh and engaging, especially for our young people. If we try new ways of teaching, we can reach new young



people expressing that we are real and relevant to this age. This can make a huge difference.

Change isn't nearly as scary for a Church if change is part of the Church's history. I believe somewhere in the Trinity Church's past lies the keys to a successful future. New initiatives were launched by the new ministers and members multiple times in the past. I find unlocking this history, will unlock our future.

During these first 100 days, I have not been able to meet everyone although I am really looking forward to it. I have an amazing team I can rely on to help me harvest relationships with you all. They have generously assisted me in many ways such as scheduling visits to hospitals, hospices, homes etc. I hope to share my heart with all of you and for us to share care and kindness. My guess is that a few random acts of kindness each week are quickly mentoring sympathy.

From the 100 days of working in the Circuit and Trinity, I know I have a tough job ahead of me, but with the Lord's blessings, your cooperation and hard work, we will reap the reward of seeing the Kingdom advance in your communities.

During transitional times we face joys, jeers and unexpected challenges. This period of time is for us to set priorities right, and ensuring we bathe them with daily dedicated prayers, and setting up a routine to be approachable and available for all.

I have found a great, friendly and collaborative team in the Circuit and among stewards at Trinity Church. I appreciate their support and cooperation during this period of settling in. You might have read or heard the announcement regarding our dear friend Rev. Mark's new appointment. **No one in the circuit could have predicted that we will be saying goodbye to our dear friend this early. We all are both saddened and gladdened for Mark and honour his calling for the hospital chaplaincy.** I verdict his pastoral heart and his fruitful services. As he is preparing to leave in March this sets a variety of new challenges for myself and the Leadership Team. When we are in the stationing process, it might not be promising, it can bring about uncertainty, but I humbly request that you pray for Mark in his new appointment and pray for the Church.

My targets are to change and challenge myself for the efficiency, newness and interchangeability in Church ministry and mission. I will do my best to try and reach new younger families which are the future of the Church. I also want to dedicate time for Bible studies, to have a dedicated prayer time of healing and helping all in need.



One might ask how will you get to know your community? For me this would involve embedding myself in through meeting your school heads, chamber of commerce officials, mayor, city council officials and others. Discovering and understanding the Church's stated and unstated vision for ministry. Assessing the style of leadership, determining projects that will need advance vigilant planning and support. This is how communities are built and maintained.

I must say as a Methodist Minister you only have one opportunity to start fresh at each appointment. Undoubtedly, there will be unforeseen challenges that will complicate my best laid plan; however, if you have no plan, that will be evident.

As Carl F. George wrote: "If a church leader has a vision that goes beyond being well thought of, a vision that includes harvest, then some important decisions must be made intentionally."

Happy New Year.

I hold you in earnest prayer!

Rev. Asif Karam

BIBLE STUDY

The Study of John

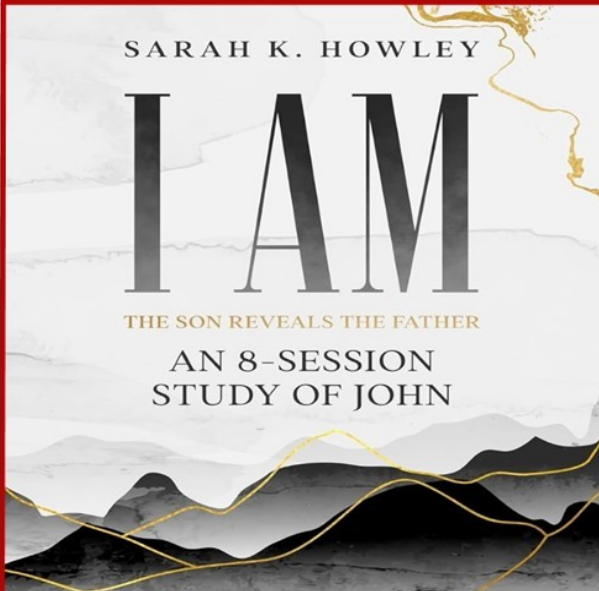
"In the run up to Easter 2025 we will again be holding a bible study. This time we will be focussing on the eight, "I am sayings" in John's Gospel and using a study guide already purchased by the circuit. Karen has kindly prepared the advert for our bible study.

A team comprising our ministers, local preachers and worship leaders have "volunteered" to record a short talk on one of the "I am sayings" and we will use the talks and the study guides to enlightenment in the sessions below.

Once again, we are offering face to face and Zoom sessions, the dates and times are shown below. The Circuit Leadership team have agreed to subsidise the study guides to the tune of £3 each and this means we will only be asking £6.00 from participants for their copy of the guide.

A number of people have already signed up and I hope you will be able to join us. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. The advert tells you how to get your study guide and join us.

Mike Fogg



CHELMSFORD

METHODIST

CIRCUIT

THE STUDY

OF JOHN



The heart of this study comes from Psalm 9:10 'Those who know your name trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you'

WEEK	TUESDAYS ZOOM 7.30-9.30PM	WEDNESDAYS AT TRINITY METHODIST FACE TO FACE 2-4PM
1	25th February 2025	26th February 2025
2	4th March 2025	5th March 2025
3	11th March 2025	12th March 2025
4	18th March 2025	26th March 2025
5	25th March 2025	26th March 2025
6	1st April 2025	2nd April 2025
7	8th April 2025	9th April 2025
8	15th April 2025	16th April 2025

BOOKINGS:

EMAIL: karen.murrell@chelmsfordcircuit.org.uk

ONLINE: Click on the QR Code



£6.00 per study guide can be made by **cash or cheque** in an envelope and dropped off in the post box or posted to

Trinity Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB.

<https://www.trinitymethodistchelmsford.org/>

Cheques Payable: **The Methodist Church Chelmsford Circuit.**

Please include a slip of paper with your name/contact details

All envelopes to be addressed to: Karen Murrell please.

Witham Churches Together Light Party on 31st October 2024.

After a successful summer holiday club run by Witham Churches Together based around the Olympics theme we came up with the idea of having a Light party as a follow up with some of the children that we got to meet and know from the holiday club and to invite others children to join in with the fun

We recognised there are a range of views on Halloween and Christians have different standpoints, but those on the planning meeting we believed it was important to have an alternative to Halloween parties and trick or treat. We wanted to be inclusive, welcoming and focus on and celebrating the goodness



and light of Jesus Christ. After the children arrived at the Methodist church, who graciously offered to host this event, Rev'd 'Femi Cole-Njie (Moderator for Witham Churches Together) offered us a warm welcome and then we had great fun and praised God as we sung light themed songs, such as, 'My Lighthouse' and 'This Little Light of Mine'.

Rachel Grimwood, who works in schools in Witham as a Christian worker shared a video and some encouraging words from the Bible.



The Children then had great fun with the craft activities making lanterns and we were pleasantly surprised how engaged the children were with this. It was lovely to hear the conversations around the tables as the children were cutting and sticking their lanterns.



Witham Churches Together Light Party on 31st October 2024.



We were fortunate to have lots of willing volunteers and an excellent spread of party food, which was much appreciated.



After a feast of party food we played traditional party games and had much fun.

It also lovely to hear one Mum say how she knew she could leave her children with us and that they would be cared for well and they would be offered a positive experience. The time went so quickly, but that can happen when you are having fun!

I can honestly say a good time was had by all.



I am thankful to God that we could put on this party , that we had lots of excellent volunteers and that Witham Methodist church were willing to host. I am already looking forward to the next event, watch this space. My special thanks go to Rev'd 'Femi Cole-Njie and Rachel Grimwood.

Please give thanks and continue to pray for Witham Churches Together as we share in the partnership in the Gospel truths.

Rev. Howard Schnaar (C of E), Vice Moderaor for Witham Churches Together.

Storm Bert

There we were on Maldon High street
Sunday morning, our people to greet
Looking forward to praise the Lord
When suddenly: "Oh my word!"

The road ahead has no way through
A fire-engine, ambulances a few
Blue flashing lights, policeman too
"Let's stop in Butt lane, that will do!"

Car safely parked, further down we go
We're behind the church, it's survived the blow
No apparent damage, from the rear
"No mate, you can't get through here!"

Back we go to approach on a different track
The barrier is raised when we apply a little tact
No damage to people, or to vans and cars
bricks and roofing bits are strewn near and far

So, whilst God causes (in Psalm Twenty Nine)
The Cedars of Lebanon break and decline
Read on to Psalm Ninety Two
To hear the other things He can do:

"The Righteous will flourish like a palm tree!"
Were we saved from Storm Bert, and made free?
Now, like a Cedar of Lebanon we must grow
And fill our church with New Year glow.....

John Clemo 4th December 2024



HATFIELD PEVEREL METHODIST CHURCH

We are fortunate to have a close connection with Hatfield Peverel St Andrews Junior School, beginning in 2019 when Sandy started a weekly Lunch Club, ably assisted by Barry and Ria. We streamed items online for children during lockdown and Lunch Club finally restarted afterwards, until Sandy moved away from the area, when ultimately Ria took responsibility with Barry and Aileen supporting her in this valuable outreach work. We were also privileged to share the interactive event introducing the life of Jesus, known as Life Expo with all 240 children participating.

Eddie and I agreed to continue Lunch Club during Barry and Ria's sabbatical, with other church members helping. There are two half hour sessions each week, the first for years 5 and 6 (only up to 8 children attend), and the second for years 3 and 4 when we have to close the doors when the room is full – up to 18 children.

We wanted to share some familiar Bible stories and heroes, but were keen to emphasise what we can learn from them. We learnt more about Daniel and his faithfulness to God, against all the odds. Samson came next, thinking about famous people with special gifts and remembering that we all receive special gifts from God. We were also reminded to choose our friends carefully and trust the right people. The parable of the lost sheep reminded us how it feels to lose something precious – or to become lost, and the joy in finding the precious item, or being found. We learnt about the shepherd who loves us so much he never gives up on us. The story of Jesus calming the storm made us realise how much Jesus cares about us and will help us.





When it comes to the Christmas story, it can become over-familiar so we decided to go with themes, allowing the children to tell us what they knew. The first was angels – messengers from God, how many different ways do we receive messages? We remembered the angel appearing to Mary and Joseph, as well as the shepherds, with such important news. Next

came journeys, where we thought about what you would need to take on a journey and those who travelled a distance. What might they have needed to take with them? Advent gave us the opportunity to think about – Advent calendars of course! Waiting, anticipation, looking forward. We thought of the visitors in the Christmas story – Mary and Joseph, shepherds and wise men, and remembered how much we must prepare if we are travelling or receiving guests, and how much we need to help at this time. For our final Lunch Club we chose the topic of gifts. Of course, there are the gifts of the wise men, but, more importantly, the gift of Jesus, Saviour of the world.

We have had a lot of fun, with Eddie providing magic tricks and music to make the stories memorable, (of course, it was ‘be bold, be strong’ for Samson!). We also provided a craft activity each week, with something memorable for them to take away from the session.

A special ‘well done’ to Ria and all those who prepare and deliver meaningful messages to our young people in our churches. It is such important work.

Jane Cook



Finger Sheep Puppet

Spirituality, Scripture and Conflict

**Tuesday 11th February 2025 or Tuesday 24th June
9.30am to 3.30pm on zoom**

**Deepening our understanding of the wisdom and impact of
scripture in managing change and transforming conflict.**

Book your place here:

11th February: <https://SSC110225.eventbrite.co.uk>

24th June: <https://SSC240625.eventbrite.co.uk>



SCAN ME

Contact Brec Seaton:

seatonb@methodistchurch.org.uk



WINTER SUNRISE

I have a number of photographer friends and one in particular likes capturing images of sun rises. One July, he showed me a wonderful image which he had captured the week before of the mist on the River Stour as the sun rose, not far from Flatford Mill. He was there before 6 O'clock in the morning. Now that's what I call commitment!

I like sun rises too, but I think they are an experience best savoured in the winter months, particularly December and January. The image below looks very exotic and some of you may recognise it as I have used it at the start of one of my services.

It was captured on the 6th January 2022 in South Woodham Ferrers at Clements Green Creek. Gale had got up to go to work and suggested I look at the sky outside. Given the strong orange colour in the sky it didn't take me long to put some clothes on and hasten down to the Creek and watch the sun rise. The image you see before you has had its top cut off to create a panoramic presentation. Someone disturbed a flock of birds, and they went up into the sun as well. If only the tide had been in it would have been perfect. Still, I'm always hopeful of another winter sunrise, this time with the tide in!

I suppose this image symbolises the new year for me.

Mike Fogg



ADVANCED SAFEGUARDING COURSE



Please see below to the Eventbrite link for in person training in **Rayleigh Essex on January 9th 2025.**

Thursday 9th January 2025 @ 10am

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1089721659819?aff=oddtcreator>

Please note that lunch will not be provided but a selection of snacks and hot drinks will be available, the participants are free to bring their own lunch as there will be a half hour break.

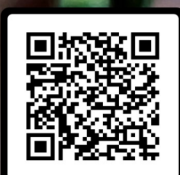
This will be cancelled if there are not enough participants.

Change, Transition and Conflict

Over two mornings
Tuesday 4th February and
Thursday 6th February
9.30am to 12.30pm

For more information please contact Brec Seaton
seatonb@methodistchurch.org.uk

Book at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/positive-working-together-818889>



SCAN ME

The  Methodist Church





ENCOUNTER 2025

a Methodist exploration of
discipleship & vocation

What is the Encounter Programme?

- Encounter is a place to deepen your awareness of God
- An opportunity to reflect on your faith journey
- A supportive small group environment for sharing and learning together
- A place to help you discern your unique calling

Encounter runs from February to November with monthly meetings with a small group of fellow disciples learning together and supporting one another. Each month we explore a discipleship or vocation theme together as we learn more about God, ourselves and our personal calling from God. Encounter will take place on Monday evenings.

www.methodist.org.uk/encounter

Join us at a taster evening in January 2025 to find out more.

(Choose one of the three taster dates when choosing your ticket.)

Encounter is open to people across the Methodist Church in Great Britain.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/encounter-2025-taster-evenings-registration-1089619022829?aff=oddtcreator>

Support for UK Aid

One Friday in November the local BBC TV news carried an article about the Felsted based UK-Aid charity running low on tinned food and toiletries for the children in Ukraine. This Essex based charity has been helping the children in Ukraine since shortly after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear explosion. One of the volunteers was interviewed on TV at the barn where they store the tins and toiletries, and it appears that this year they have had a drop in donations.

I saw the article on a Friday, and it nagged me all weekend. I thought, "If the people in our churches gave a couple of tins each, then it would make a difference". So, I contacted Mark, and he asked Karen to send an email round. **Three churches have responded, Maldon and SWF have each sent a car boot full of tins and toiletries and together they gave almost £200 in cash as well.**

Witham used their Christingle service to ask for donations and the image on the right shows the front of the church with the gifts ready to go. Jenny and Chris are going to take them over to the barn on the 21st December, just in time for the lorry load to go to Ukraine at the end of the month.



When I took the second delivery the organiser looked in the bags I had brought and said, "Just what we want". Interestingly, they can accept clean blankets as well, however the customs will not let duvets in!

The charities details are below.

<https://www.uk-aid.org/>

Mike Fogg



wholehearted monthly

Wholehearted monthly

Wholehearted monthly is a new online gathering of people who are passionate about joining God in mission. Each month, we'll hear testimony from local leaders, learn from a renowned guest speaker, and break into groups for wisdom-sharing with those committed to Gospel justice, evangelism, inclusion and growth.

More information will be coming in the new year, but save the dates in your diary for the second Tuesday in each month, starting 11th March, 7.00 -9.00pm.

Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/wholehearted-monthly-tickets-1082365166349?aff=learning>

An introduction to unconscious bias



Unconscious Bias Training

Thursday 3rd April 2025 at 10am, online

An Introductory Unconscious Bias training session, run for members and leaders of the Methodist Church in Britain

Learn more: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/387493412227...>

Mandatory training for all Circuit Stewards, Church Stewards and those working with families/ children. Full list on The Methodist Website.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/the-inclusive-methodist-church/training-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/mandatory-edi-training-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>

What is unconscious bias?

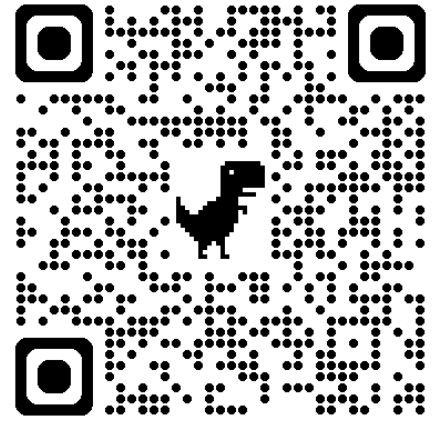
'Unconscious bias refers to a bias of which we are unaware and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.' Hidden biases have the power to undermine and derail our desire to act justly, and fairly towards other people and lots of areas in our decision making. eg, when it comes to recruitment, promotion, and openness to new sources of ideas. It is possible to be unconsciously biased regarding disability, religion, race, gender, age, social class, and more.

We will be using the video resources for introducing unconscious bias which is now available on the Methodist Church Website.

The resources can be found at: [Introduction to Unconscious Bias – for church councils, circuit meetings and other groups - Methodist Church](#)

The online session will include watching the videos and joining in small group conversation/reflection following each of the 3 video clips.

The reading/study material which is required before and after the session will be sent to participants once they have booked a place and the booking period has closed. When booking your place, please select which session you will be attending.



Find Help <https://streetsupport.net/> Find local services to help you get what you need From a supportive chat and a warm meal, to legal advice and medical help, find help near you.

**Copy this page for your notice boards.
An extremely useful site with lots of help
and support for the homeless.**

**“We share our Faith”
“We tell of the love of God”
Two elements of a Methodist Way Of Life we often struggle with**



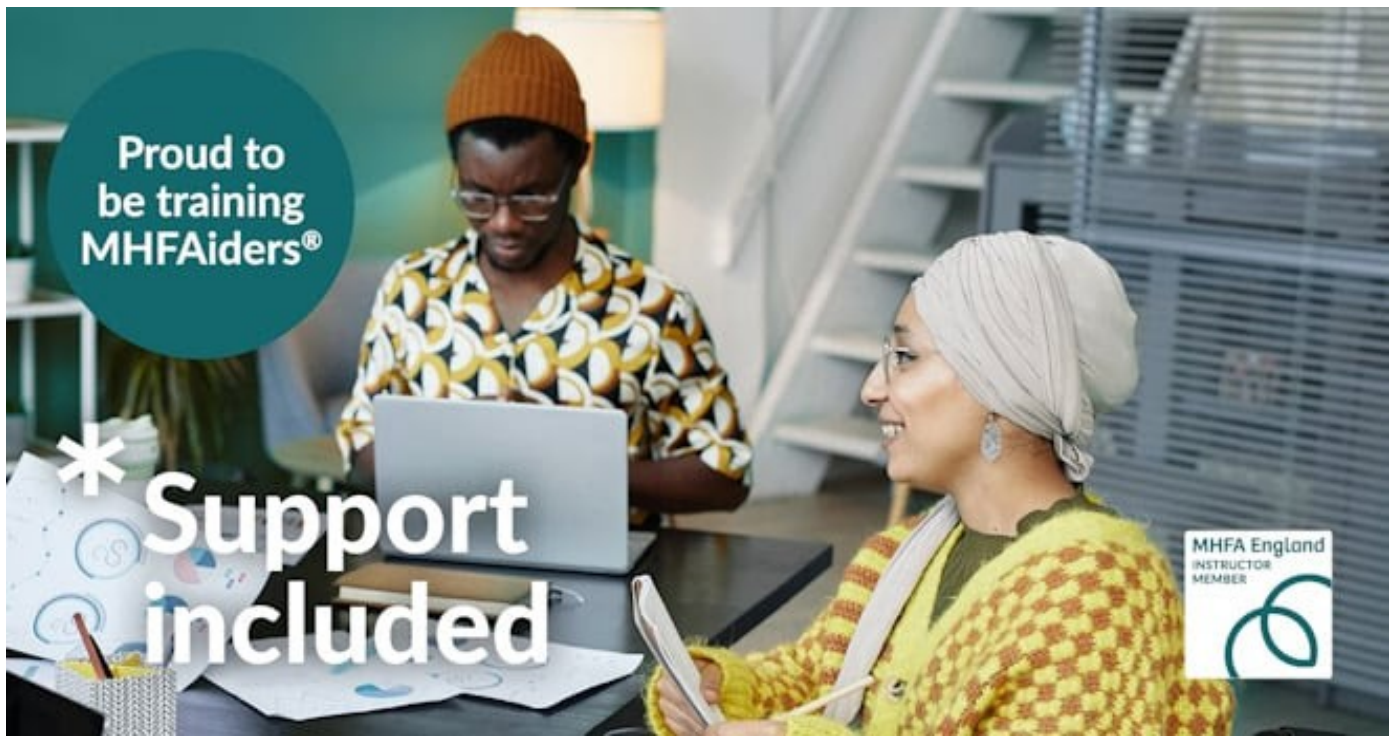
Talking Jesus is a 6 session course that explores what society thinks about Christians and the church today. It also equips and empowers Christians to talk about their faith to others.

Talking Jesus Course starts Wednesday 8th January at 7.30pm on Zoom.

This course will be followed by a 3 session ACORN group

Contact Angela Brydon for more details and to register: dde@BEHDistrict.org.uk





ONLINE Adult Mental Health First Aid

Tuesday 21st January and Tuesday 28th January, 9am - 5pm.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a nationally accredited training course which teaches people how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health and provide help on a first aid basis. This course is being delivered by accredited trainers from the Methodist Church Great Britain who are licensed by Mental Health First Aid England to do so. For more information visit [MHFA England](#). Usually the course costs £300, however if you are connected to the Methodist Church it's been subsidised to £60 (non- refundable).

For more information & to book, please click [here](#).



Full Brochure for 2025

https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/Learning_Network_Brochure_September_2024.pdf

Also on the Circuit Website

<https://www.chelmsfordcircuit.co.uk/admin6/training/learning-network-guide/>

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

NEXT CIRCUIT MEETING

9.45am Till Midday

SATURDAY 15TH MARCH—TRINITY METHODIST

New date

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
March/April 2025
by Mid February**