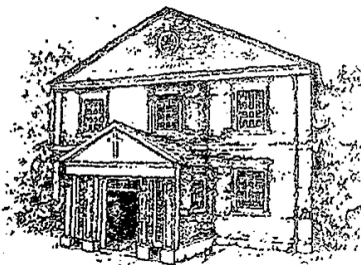
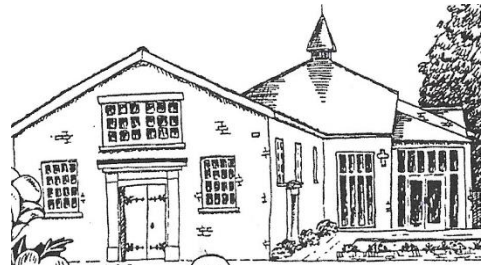


# Stepping Stones

*Newsletter for*

EPPING UNITED  
REFORMED CHURCH



ONGAR UNITED  
REFORMED CHURCH

April 2023



# Epping URC News

## Churches Together in Epping and District

The Walk of Witness will take place on Good Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> April at 11am. It will begin outside the former Methodist Church- note this is a different location that in previous years. It will finish on The Green followed by refreshments at the Catholic Church.

## Toddler Group

We finished the spring term with a short Easter service in the sanctuary followed by an Easter Egg hunt and the children made Easter baskets to put their eggs in. During Comic Relief week in March, we had a red nose party when we raised £45.



## Zimbabwe

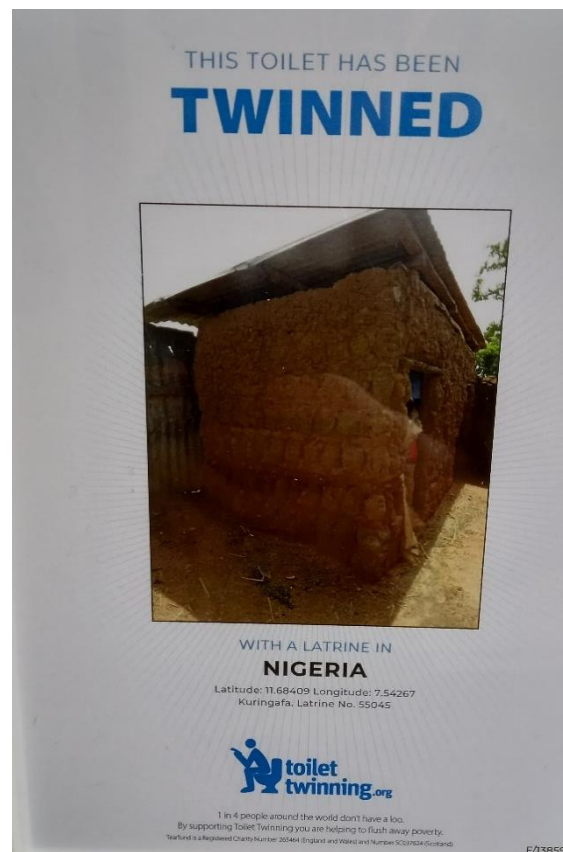
Our service on the 30<sup>th</sup> April will be a special service led by Lindsey on our twinned church in Mbare, Harare followed by a Zimbabwean themed fellowship lunch.

## Coffee Morning

We shall be having a Coffee Morning on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May, 10:30am-12pm and this will be for Christian Aid week.

## Toilet Twinning

The church has twinned our 5 toilets through the Toilet Twinning scheme run by Tearfund, by which toilets are twinned with a new toilet in the developing world at a cost of £60 each, providing sanitary and safe facilities. Our toilets are twinned with those in Nigeria, Zambia, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Each toilet has picture and geographical coordinates so you can see and find the location of each toilet and these are hung above our toilets.



## **Birthdays**

Happy birthday this month to Janet and Masie.

## **Epping Chorus**

### Good Friday Concert:

Stainer's Crucifixion

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> April, 7:30pm at St John's Church

Free Admission, programmes £2.50, retiring collection towards choir funds.

### New Singers Wanted

Do you enjoy singing? Then come and have a go!

We sing a wide variety of choral music, mainly sacred but other styles too.

Under our excellent choral director, music is rehearsed thoroughly and at the right pace to suit all. It's often fun too!

We rehearse on Fridays, 8-9:30pm at the Roman Catholic Church Hall in Epping.

Please contact us via our website [www.eppingchorus.org](http://www.eppingchorus.org) where more details about the choir can be found.

Comment from a recent new member: *"I didn't think this would be for me, but I've found a new love in singing choral music."*

## **Preaching Plan**

2<sup>nd</sup> Fred Arthur

9<sup>th</sup> Revd Kathryn Taylor *Easter Sunday/ Holy Communion*

16<sup>th</sup> Graham Watson

23<sup>rd</sup> John Ellis

30<sup>th</sup> Lindsey Brown

## **Ongar URC News**

Easter is almost upon us. On Good Friday as usual we will be joining with the other churches in and around Ongar for our Walk of Witness and welcoming everyone back to our Hall for tea, coffee and, of course, Hot Cross Buns. It will be good once again to enjoy the fellowship with others and this has been missed during the 'Covid years' and it was good to meet last year.

After the sadness of Good Friday, it is good that we can rejoice in the resurrection on Easter Sunday. With the lighter evenings, the Spring flowers in all their glorious colours, as well as, we hope, sunshine and warmth around the corner, Easter can feel that we are coming out of darkness into a brighter future. That light that came into the world at Christmas is with us again after the trials of Holy Week. Our lectionary readings have concentrated for many weeks on darkness and light, including the blind having their sight restored and coming out of their lives of darkness to see the light around them. As we go forward after Easter, let us pray that we will continue to see that light in our lives, our eyes open to the glories of God and the great gift to us of Jesus. May we continue to work together to the glory of His name in this church and this town, bringing light, love and joy to all we meet.

**Joan**

### **Twinkles**

We are continually surprised by the response we get from our carers to our charity mornings, particularly when we count up how much we have made on the day. Our Comic Relief morning for Red Nose Day was no exception and £95 was raised. We really appreciate the effort people put into the day, especially those providing cakes and raffle prizes. The cakes are enjoyed with our coffee and tea, as well as being taken home for others in the family. We know that times can be hard for many people, particularly young families, so their generosity is amazing. It always seems to me that God is with us on our charity mornings as the atmosphere is so different from our usual Thursday mornings, with everyone talking and enjoying their cake together. They may not come along to church on a Sunday but we are able to show God's love to them in our welcome and all we do in the group, so please pray for our group and its work.

**Joan**

### **Ongar Town Festival, 30<sup>th</sup> April**

As last year, I will be keeping the church open after the morning service on this day and serving refreshments. If you are able, can you please make or bring along extra cake to the Saturday coffee morning or to church on the Sunday so that we can sell this on the day. Last year we had many visitors who had come quite a distance to the town and it was good to speak to them and explain a little about the church and its history. I am in Hatfield Heath URC in the morning but, as their service has an earlier start, should be able to get back to Ongar by the time the service here is over.

**Joan**

### **Reflections From the Lent Bible Study**

I hope that you have picked up the booklets and, if you have not been able to attend, at least read them and reflected on them during the week. We have been considering discipleship and as I have prepared them, I have certainly given much thought to how I found faith, how it has grown in me and whether I have passed on 'the gift' as it was described in Week 4. We have been few in number on Tuesdays but pray that you have all been with us in thought and prayer as you have read the booklets. Synod has been considering how it can support churches to flourish when the helpers are few; we should all be considering this too, how we can take 'the gift' out of our churches and pass it on

to others. 'The gift' is not intended to be shut in within four walls of the church for an hour each Sunday.

**Joan**

### **Church Flowers**

We would like to be able to continue with the flower arrangements for our Church on Sundays. One idea to achieve this would be to ask for flowers to be donated occasionally. An example of this would be to make a donation the month your birthday is in. If you would like to help, Vijaya and Jean are happy to arrange the flowers on Wednesdays during Open House. Please let us know your thoughts on this.

**Pam and Jean**

We would like to wish a "Happy Birthday" to all who have birthdays in April.

**Service Dates** for April, all at 11.00am

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Joan Smith	Palm Sunday
9 <sup>th</sup>	Karen Quelch	Easter Sunday
16 <sup>th</sup>	Joan Smith	
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Joan Smith	
30 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Kathryn Taylor	Sacrament of Holy Communion

## **Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area**

**The New HAEBEA is almost here!**

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 the Bishop's Stortford Circuit and the Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area will officially come together to form the new Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area!

It will be composed of thirteen churches including four URCs, two Local Ecumenical Projects, seven Methodist churches and be staffed by three Methodist presbyters, 1½ URC ministers, a full-time administrator, and a strong team of local preachers.

A lot of preparations have been made including meetings to deal with finance and governance issues. A joint preaching plan has been in place since December so we have already been enjoying the considerable benefits of hearing preachers we may not have heard before.

All in all, it is very exciting. There will be more resources for mission and a larger area within which to serve. For all of this, we give thanks to God.

**Celebration Service**

Our Celebration Service to commemorate the new HAEBEA will take place on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 4 pm at St Andrew's Harlow. The Methodist District Chairman, Revd David Chapman, will be the preacher.

Please put it in your diaries now!

## Holy Week Services

All are Welcome

### Maundy Thursday

- **St Andrew's Methodist Church, Harlow, 6-8pm.** Shared meal and worship- As we need numbers for catering, please phone the minister, Revd Blair Kirby on Tel: 01279 4434400
- **Leaside Church, Ware, 7pm**
- **Hertford Methodist Church, 7pm**

### Good Friday

- **St Andrew's Methodist Church, Harlow, 10:30am.** Service of Readings and Prayers.
- **Hoddesdon Methodist Church, 9:45am**

## Holy Week Reflection

For Holy week there is a reflection for each day on the Haebea website:

<https://www.haebea.org/news/newsroom/daily-devotions-for-lent.html>. Below is the first reflection for the Monday of Holy week:

### Gratitude and Joy

Readings: Isaiah 42; 1-7, John 12;1-11

*"The house was full of the scent of the ointment." (John 12:3)*



Kenneth Grahame's book *The Wind in the Willows* tells the story of the Mole, the Water Rat and the famous Mr Toad. At one point, the author tells us: "The Mole waggled his toes from sheer happiness, spread his chest with a sigh of full contentment, and leaned back blissfully into the soft cushions. 'What a day I'm having!' he said." Then, on another occasion, "'Glorious, stirring sight!' murmured Mr Toad. 'The poetry of motion! The real way to travel! The only way to travel!'" Both these characters, Mole and Mr Toad, are expressing, in their own ways, their happiness and their excitement.

In today's Gospel, we hear how Mary takes an expensive perfume and anoints the feet of Jesus. The house is filled with the fragrance of the perfume. She feels an intense joy at the presence of Jesus and wants to honour him. The smell of the perfume lingers, despite the criticism levelled at Mary for what she does.

It might sometimes feel difficult to find joy in our lives, especially if we are busy and have to work hard, or if we are short of money and wondering how to pay our bills. But we can look for small things to be grateful for – a baby's smile, the beauty of the clouds in the sky, a hug from a friend. And we can always be alert for the smell of the perfume, the constant presence of Jesus in our lives. Like Mary, we can express our joy at knowing his love.

Prayer:

*Lord, in times of hardship and difficulty you are always with us. May we experience the joy of your presence in our lives and seek to serve you with gratitude in our hearts. Amen.*

## **URC Eastern Synod**

### **2023 Children, Youth and Family Events**

- Praise Party with Doug Horley, Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 3:30pm at Christ Church Braintree
- The Playground Assault Course youth event, Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2:30pm at Barrow near Bury St Edmunds
- Family Fun Afternoon for all ages 0-100! Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August 1pm at Trinity Park, Ipswich

Contact Nicola Grieves [cydo@urceastern.org.uk](mailto:cydo@urceastern.org.uk) for more information.

# Moving STORIES

Commitment  
for **Life**

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

Committed to supporting our global partners **ZIMBABWE**

## Latest Campaign from Global Justice Now



Global Justice Now would like to thank *Commitment for Life* sincerely for its generous support throughout 2022 and into 2023.

Rich countries and polluting corporations in the global north are the most responsible for climate change. As much as 92% of the carbon emissions that are in excess of safe planetary limits come from those rich countries. These include the UK, which is historically the world's 5th biggest polluter. Billions of people across the global south are facing climate chaos, despite being the least responsible for causing it.

At the COP27 climate talks, held in November 2022, countries finally agreed to set up an international compensation fund for 'loss and damage' due to climate change.

Global Justice Now is campaigning to make sure that this compensation is paid by the big polluting corporations in the fossil fuel industry, including in the UK, which has a moral and historic responsibility to act.

Global Justice Now is encouraging us to stand in solidarity with the global south in their demands. We can do this by telling the UK government to make polluters pay for loss and damage! You can do this by signing the petition addressed to the Prime Minister that is on their website [www.bit.ly/mpptcd](http://www.bit.ly/mpptcd)

## Prayer

God, thank you that we have the privilege of serving you. Give us the courage to face down injustice, the strength to make a difference, and the wisdom to choose the right action to bring about your desire for peace, equity, and justice, especially for the poorest in the world. In Jesus we live and pray. Amen.



Photo: by Albrecht Fietz from Pixabay

Many aid agencies have relied on the strategy of 'development' to bring about an end to poverty. Yet after decades of hard work, we still observe islands of absurd wealth surrounded by a sea of debilitating poverty in Zimbabwe. What has gone wrong? It seems despite our best efforts at development, extreme deprivation and inequalities persist. Why? At least part of the answer is that the economic architecture in which we operate is fundamentally unfair. This means that development – in this context – simply increases the gap between rich and poor at an ever-faster pace.

Christian Aid's research suggests that highly exploited countries lose \$416bn a year in revenues because of finance flowing illicitly across borders, often facilitated by British, American, and now Chinese banks. The IMF estimates that \$200bn a year is lost to low-income countries alone, a larger share of GDP than for advanced economies, and over four times the amount of official aid that they receive from donors. Often this 'aid' is geared towards privatising the social good around the world to benefit Big Finance. This tracks well with Jesus' observation that in this 'Domination System' of empires (some Bible translations call it 'this world') the poor will always be with us. It is well beyond time that all aid agencies concentrate their efforts at exposing this global financial architecture and proffer genuine alternatives to business-as-usual.

Please pray that economists, bankers, politicians, aid agencies and churches wake up to this fundamental injustice for the sake of all those we seek to bless through our sharing and gifts.



## URC urges Home Office to drop Illegal Migration Bill

Over 1000 church leaders from across the UK have joined senior Church leaders from JPIT's denominations including the URC in a joint statement expressing opposition to the government's new 'Illegal Migration Bill':

We are appalled by the proposals in the government's 'Illegal Migration Bill' to detain, punish and reject thousands of people seeking safety. They are completely incompatible with our Christian conviction that all human beings are made in the image of God, and are therefore inherently worthy of treatment which honours their dignity. Instead of dignity, these plans will foster discrimination and distrust, and cause immeasurable harm to people already made vulnerable by conflict and persecution. If ever there was a contemporary example of ignoring our neighbour and walking by on the other side, this is it.

When two in three people who cross the channel to seek sanctuary in the UK are granted asylum following rigorous checks, it seems unthinkable to reject them before they have even had a chance to have their claim for asylum heard. Many people fleeing war and persecution in countries such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Eritrea and Sudan have been left with no safe and accessible routes to claim asylum in the UK, forcing people to make difficult and dangerous decisions. The UK falls far behind our global neighbours in welcoming people seeking sanctuary into our communities, and yet these plans essentially put a ban on claiming asylum and reject the UK's responsibility to play our part in responding to global inequalities and conflict.

We all agree that we cannot continue to see thousands of people risk their lives to reach safety in the UK, but the solution cannot be deterrence and punishment. As Christians, we believe that we should be amongst the first to welcome the stranger with open arms. We urge the government to withdraw this legislation, to honour our moral and international obligations and to behave with compassion and fairness by establishing safe and accessible routes to enable the UK to play its part in welcoming people in need of safety.

