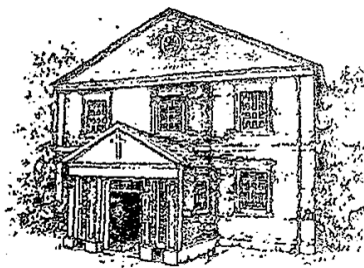
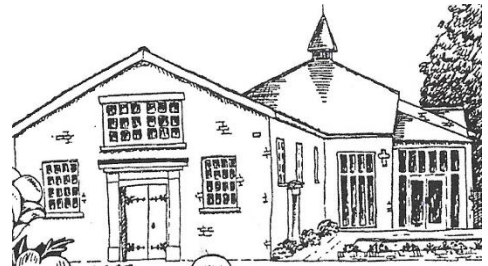


Stepping Stones

Newsletter for

EPPING UNITED
REFORMED CHURCH



ONGAR UNITED
REFORMED CHURCH

September 2023



Epping URC

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 23rd September, 10:30am-12pm: Coffee Morning in aid of Macmillan cancer support. We will have a raffle and donations of prizes will be appreciated.

Saturday 30th September, 10am-4pm: We are hosting a synod event the “Faith in Action Day” see later in the newsletter for more information or speak to Jeremy.

Sunday 8th October, 11am: Harvest Festival service, please bring non-perishable gifts for the Epping Forest Foodbank.

Toddler Group

The toddler group will resume from the 6th September following the summer break, when we will be welcoming new families who are joining us. This term we will be having a coffee morning in aid of Macmillan cancer support and we will be having a harvest service where we will be collecting gifts for the foodbank.

Message from Janet

The time has come when I have to order the weekly envelopes for 2024 so could you please let me know if you want envelopes including whether you wish to change from envelopes to standing order or vice versa.

I also need to sort out the position regarding gift aid so please let me know if you wish to change to or from gift aiding- otherwise I will assume that all those currently gift aiding wish to continue and that no one else wishes to join them.

Message from Canada!

We received the following by email:

“Presented to Mr & Mrs Oakley after 21 years faithful service at Epping Congregation church Sunday school From teachers & scholars February 7 1923”

This is the inscription on a silver bowl in the house of someone from Epping, who now lives in Canada. She does not know how the bowl came to be in her possession, but it was presented at our church 100 years ago!



(before becoming URC 50+ years ago in 1972, ours was a Congregational Church, and before that a non-conformist chapel, established in 1625)

Cleaner/Shopper Required

A member of our congregation would like to employ someone reliable to do their cleaning and shopping for her. Please ask around, or if you know of anyone who would be interested, please speak to one of the elders.

Preaching Plan, all 11am

3rd Graham Watson

10th Fred Arthur

17th Revd Kathryn Taylor *Holy Communion*

24th Gillian Amphlett

1st October Prayer & Praise

Birthday wishes in September to Barbara, Elspeth and Noah.

Ongar URC

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”. (Matthew 28: vs. 19-20)

We are thinking at this time about the church’s mission and what we would like to do in the light of the money that is available for mission from both HAEBEA and Eastern Synod. Everyone will be agreed that we would like to see more people in the church at Sunday worship but we all need to take the time to pray and reflect on how this can be achieved and what our idea of ‘mission’ is. We do need to do a lot of soul-searching as to what we are currently doing to bring people into the church. When was the last time you invited someone to come to church with you or, indeed to come to our regular coffee mornings or told someone about Twinkles? How many of you take the time to pray for Twinkles or find out what happens there other than just assuming it is a social gathering for toddlers to play?

Too often we confuse mission with evangelism. Mission is not about grabbing people in the street and preaching to them. John the Baptist called people to repent but he was paving the way for Jesus’ more gentle way, showing the love of God to all. We too often worry that we can’t do anything as our Bible knowledge is not good, we are not good with words, we feel self-conscious or afraid to talk about our faith or, indeed, that our faith is not strong enough. There are many ways we can carry out mission work and the

main thing is that we are prepared to do this outside of the church, showing God's love to all until they want to know more about our faith and Jesus.

So once again, I am asking you to really pray and reflect on just what you are prepared to do to further God's kingdom in Ongar. Are you really prepared to sit in church each Sunday carrying on in the same old way with the same community work we are currently doing, until eventually (and this could be in the very near future) the church faces closure as the burden of upkeep just gets too much for us all? You have, or can collect in the church, a questionnaire to complete and leave in the box; please really reflect on this for the need to do something cannot be put off or action left for a new, over-worked and over-stretched minister. **The need to do something is urgent and we need to make plans now!**

Some quotations about Mission to help you in your reflections:

"Missionary work can be very cost effective. It costs you £0.00 to be a missionary right where you are!" (Anonymous)

"The Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith". (Emil Brunner)

"It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God's mission." (Christopher J. H. Wright)

Joan

Twinkles

We will be starting again after the summer holidays on 14th September and, as in the past, although we have lost children to nursery and school, we don't expect many people on the first day but amazingly God is always good to us and we are surprised by how many new people do come. During this half-term we shall be having a charity morning for Macmillan Cancer Support, with cakes to eat and sell, and a raffle, on Thursday, 28th September. We find these charity mornings encourage the adults to come together and chat, often forming new friendships.....and we enjoy them too!! On Thursday, 6th October we will all go into the church for our Harvest Service, which we always finish with a verse or two of 'We plough the fields and scatter'. Half term in the schools is the week beginning Monday, 23rd October, and we will not meet. Although we hoped to do something during the summer holidays this was not possible, but. If there are enough helpers, we may try to have a half day of activities before Christmas, asking the adults to stay with children and take part too. The church's mission work once again!

Joan

Thanksgiving service for the life of Mrs. Gertie Thomas

As you know this will be our Sunday service at 11.00am on Sunday, 15th October. I will be leading this service and have asked both the family and Jean to provide me with details of Gertie's favourite hymns so that they can be incorporated into the service. If anyone has anything else they would like to suggest, e.g. a poem or short reading, including Bible readings, please speak to me.

Joan

Church Balcony

A reminder for anyone who thinks they may have items in the balcony to please clear these by the end of October. Ideally we would also like to be able to tidy up the cupboards in the church and the items stored around the pews, having perhaps a thorough tidying and cleaning day before Christmas.

Joan

Baptisms

As you may know, Rev. Ernie Bosse conducted a baptism of another baby girl at our church on Saturday, 29th July. Once again this was a very happy occasion, which was appreciated by all who attended. I see these baptisms as an opportunity for the church's mission by once again trying to maintain occasional contact with these families so that they feel that we care and they may come to think of this church as 'their church' later in their, and their children's lives.

We would like to wish a "Happy Birthday" to those having a birthday in September.

Service Dates for September All at 11.00

3 rd	Joan Smith	
10 th	Rev Kathryn Taylor	<i>Holy Communion</i>
17 th	Mike Shelbourne	
24 th	Michael Beccato-Fischer	
1 st October	Revd Kathryn Taylor	<i>Holy Communion</i>

Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area



Celebration Service
**Welcoming Bishop's Stortford Circuit
as they join HAEBEA**

St Andrew's Methodist Church
The Stow, Harlow, CM20 3AF

Saturday 9th September
4.00pm

The Preacher is Rev David Chapman, Chairman of the District
Refreshments will be served after the Service

URC Eastern Synod

Faith in Action Day

Epping URC is hosting the synods "Faith in Action Day" on **Saturday 30th September 10am-4pm**. All are Welcome. The day will be a day of talks and workshops on social justice topics including Legacies of Slavery and the environment and more. Speakers include the synod moderator Revd Lythan Nevard and a speaker from the Christian environmental charity A Rocha UK. Tea & coffee will be served but please bring a packed lunch. Please speak to Jeremy for more information.

Its not often that we have synod events such as these in our area or one of our churches, so if you are able to, please come and support the day and it promises to be a very interesting and enjoyable day!

Reform Magazine

Reform

NEWS COMMENT INSPIRATION DEBATE

Reform is a magazine exploring theology, ethics, spirituality and Christian perspectives on social and current affairs, for those who enjoy reading about Christian ideas from a wide range of viewpoints. Published by the United Reformed Church, it features news, interviews, features, regular columns, reviews, letters and is read by all: Christians, people from other faiths and those with none. Reform also comes with *Digest*, the URC news supplement containing all the latest news in the denomination.

The September edition of *Reform* magazine is out now.

You can play 'Top Trumps' with the September issue of the magazine as A Good Question asks: 'Who is your favourite disciple?' Our four contributors come up with a surprising group of personal favourites. Who is yours?

Elsewhere, Editor Steve Tomkins talks to therapist Kathryn Mannix about talking, and regular contributor Paul Kerensa wants to keep reading bedtime stories.

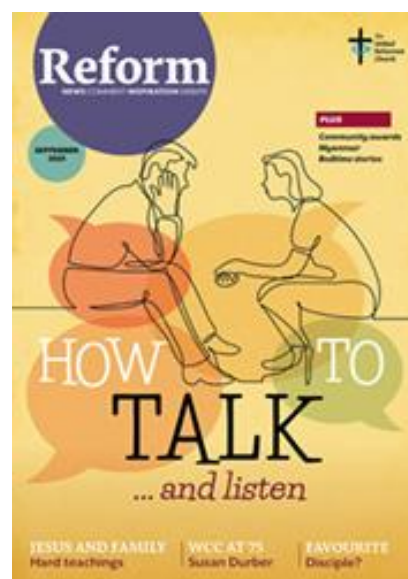
The Revd Dr Susan Durber celebrates the 75th anniversary of the World Council of Churches and the Revd Pek Muan Cuang shares his firsthand experience of life for Christians in Myanmar.

Alongside our other regular columns, Laurence Wareing introduces a local project supporting asylum seekers in Lancashire – the first of the 2023 URC Community Project Award winners.

Our churches received complimentary issues which are free to read.

Reform is available in print for £24.50 or digitally for £18 both for 12 months.

- Subscribe by phone: call 02075202721 to pay by card
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URC Commitment for Life

September 2023 Zimbabwe Update

In July 2023 our Programme Officer Kevin Snyman travelled to Zimbabwe. He concentrated his visit in the north-east and south east of the country, visiting our Christian Aid partners to and hearing the good news stories from locals who have benefitted so enormously from our partnership. “I’m grateful to the Christian Aid Country Team that facilitated our visit,” says Kevin. “The hospitality was always so generously offered, and I saw many examples of how effective our work in the region has been.”



Batsirai Byanutete, lives in the Mutoko District in Zimbabwe. He is a young man who has had his life turned around by the intervention of our Christian Aid partner. Christian Aid has assisted with the help of indigenous knowledge, doing brilliant work in identifying indigenous plants and shrubs that can be carefully combined into livestock feed. These bushes and plants are processed using a Christian Aid supplied milling machine. The product is then bagged and stored, ready for sale. This highly nutritious supplement is given to animals in lean times (like now) and just before market. The animals are healthier, which means that the community is healthier too. Your support for Commitment for Life, means that Batsirai Byanutete, instead of hanging out with directionless youths, drinking and getting into mischief, has a sense of purpose now that his milling expertise is much valued by the community.

Zimbabwe – Life is always better with a cup of tea! The resurrection bush is a native plant that many farmers grow in Zimbabwe to make herbal tea. Few plants can grow here under the baking sun. It looks just like a bundle of red, dead twigs. Agnes, however, knows that with just a little water, it will soon spring back to life. Agnes likens the resurrection bush to our lives. Sometimes life is difficult, and other times it is OK. But during the times when it is difficult, do not lose hope. Anytime, life can become good again. Like the Resurrection bush, Agnes has survived the hardest of times. A drought in her region, left her struggling to grow food, and what little she had left went to her son. She went from having three meals a day to just one! But Agnes did not give up hope. Christian Aid’s BRACT programme helps farmers to support each other and stand strong against the changing climate. With the knowledge that she has gained she can now grow food and herbs that thrive even in the driest conditions. Together with women in her community, she uses a solar-powered pump to water beans and fresh tomatoes to sell. Your support for Commitment for Life, means that Agnes can now support women who are fighting the same struggles she once did.

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for your presence in our lives. We bless and praise you for the many gifts you pour so generously into our lives. May we be transformed by the infilling of your Holy Spirit to perfectly love you through our care and support for our neighbour in need. And, in so doing, may we increasingly come to resemble you. Amen.

Epping Forest Foodbank

Latest stock needs:

- Pasta
- Tinned Spaghetti
- Dog Food
- Cat Food
- Shampoo
- Shower Gel
- Washing Up Liquid
- Tinned Meat
- Rice Pudding & Custard
- Tea & Coffee



Through the summer holidays the foodbank has supported:

- Supported 182 households
- Distributed over 4 Tonnes of Food
- 40 Volunteers supported us
- Filled 2,000 bags of food.