

Stepping Stones

Newsletter for

EPPING UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

ONGAR UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

December 2022

January 2023



Christmas Services

Christmas Day

United Service at Epping URC at 10am

New Year's Day

United Service at Ongar URC at 11am



Ongar URC News

“Look for the wise teacher who will help you grow in the faith to find your own path, and live your own questions. Beware of the ‘charismatic’ leader whose only interest is to keep you as their follower.”

This was my daily reading on 25th November and it started me thinking about what kind of minister we seek. The Elders of both Ongar and Epping will shortly have to begin preparing their Pastorate Profile to begin the search for a new minister and, so often, we resort to the usual phrases in these, describing our church as welcoming, outward looking etc., but rarely do we take the time to consider what we really seek in a minister. This should be an important consideration for us, especially as the Area looks to extend its mission work with the possible appointment of workers in the community, such as the role of Children and Families’ Worker previously filled by Debbie.

Do we too often search for a minister who is content to go with what we have now, keeping the present congregation happy rather than seeking to make it grow? Do we pick someone who we like, who fits in with our traditional views of a minister, rather than someone who will challenge us and help us to grow in the faith, perhaps leading us to work alongside them in the work of the church in the community?

Cecil challenged me personally so that I continued studying to become a lay preacher, helping me to grow my own faith, finding my own path and taking on opportunities to

help others through Bible studies, which I had not previously thought I was capable of doing, or even that I was a good enough Christian to do those things. He did not push me to do these, rather God called me through him and ensured that opportunities opened up for me.

We are at an important time in the lives of both our churches as we consider all these things and we need to pray for God's guidance at this time. We should also be willing to work together, accommodating differing views and aspirations for the future, talking them through, embracing change if that is God's will for us, rather than being content with what we have. Jesus was certainly a 'charismatic' leader but he taught his followers to find their own paths, going out to spread the Word regardless of any dangers to themselves. Let us too take up His challenge.

Joan

Twinkles

We continue to welcome new children to Twinkles and we were particularly glad to welcome a Ukrainian mother and her daughter. They participate fully in our mornings despite the language difficulties, the little girl trying hard to repeat words and phrases in English after us, joining in songs that she recognizes. Our morning attendance has been variable, particularly due to the heavy rain we have experienced, as many of our mothers walk to the hall with their children. Whatever the weather our team turn up to give a warm welcome to anyone who braves the rain to come even if we do drip all over the place!

Our charity morning for Children in Need raised £86. The cakes were much appreciated and some taken home to eat later! The children also enjoyed the small cupcakes I bought so that they didn't feel left out!

We finish our term with our Christmas service on 15th December and a small party for the children, with mulled wine and mince pies for everyone else.

Joan

Message from Georgina

Georgina would like to thank everybody at Church and Open House for their support offered to her on the loss of her son Richard. She is very grateful for their prayers, kind thoughts and help.

Christmas Coffee Morning

Our Christmas Coffee Morning was well attended and it was lovely to welcome old friends and new friends at this special time of year. We are supporting charities during our coffee mornings and the £234.00 raised will be split between Crisis at Christmas and The Salvation Army.

We would like to wish 'Happy Birthday' to those having birthdays in December and January.

Service Dates for December and January all at 11am

December

- 4th Joan Smith
11th Revd Stuart Veitch *Holy Communion*
18th Efua Koi-Larbi
18th Carol Service 6:30pm
25th United Christmas Worship at Epping URC 10am

January

- 1st Joan Smith
8th Elizabeth Stockdale
15th Revd John Buxton
22nd Revd Ernie Bosse *Holy Communion*
29th Julie Finbow

Epping URC News

Christingle Service

We celebrated the first Sunday in advent with our Christingle service, everyone -young and old- making their own and reflecting on the symbolic significance of the orange (the created world), the never-ending red ribbon (Jesus' love and sacrifice), the 4 cocktail sticks (the seasons) and the fruit and sweets (the fruitfulness of the world and its gifts) and the lit candle: the hope and promise of light in the darkness...



Advent Group

Our advent discussion and prayer group runs every Monday evening during advent, 7:30pm at the church. If anyone wishes to join online or would like a lift, speak to Lindsey.

Toddler Group

On the 14th December, the toddler group will be having their end of term Christmas party followed by a nativity service in the sanctuary.

Clothing for Refugees

Claire is collecting clothing items for the refugees living in our area, please bring items to the church no later than the 11th December. Requested items are men's trousers, jumpers, hoodies, coats (not leather or woollen), shoes, boots, sliders and hats.

Coffee Mornings

Our November Coffee morning raised £26 for toilet twinning. The next will be on Saturday 3rd December 10am-12pm where will also be collecting for toilet twinning. There will be no coffee morning in January.

Birthdays

Birthday wishes to Margaret, Alan, and Emily who all celebrate birthdays in December.

Services for December 11am

4th Alan Whymark

11th Michael Beccato-Fischer *Holy Communion*

18th Lindsey Brown *Carol & Nativity Service*

25th Joan Smith *Christmas Day, **10am***

January

1st United Service at Ongar URC 11am

8th Fred Arthur

15th Elizabeth Stockdale

22nd Lindsey Brown *Holy Communion*

29th Efua Koi-Larbi

Epping Chorus

Two upcoming concerts, both at St John's Church Epping

Friday 16th December, 7:30pm

Fantasia on Christmas Carols by Ralph Vaughan Williams

Programme includes traditional carols and choir pieces including:

- Rutter: Carol arrangements
- Gardner: The Holly & the Ivy
- Geoff Funk: Carol of the Bells

Free admission, programme £2.50, retiring collection for CHES Homeless charity (active in the Epping Forest District)

Saturday 21st January

The Armed Man by Karl Jenkins

Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area

Christmas Tree Festival

The fabulous Christmas Tree Festival is back at **Leaside church, Ware** this year.

Open on Friday 2 December: 6pm — 9pm
and Saturday 3 December: 9am — 1pm

There's a fanatic Christmas Hamper packed with goodies to be won.

All proceeds from the Festival will go to support the work of:

- Action for Children
- Christian Aid,
- Leaside Community Centre.

All are welcome



Light up a Light at Hatfield Heath URC

Sunday 11 December, 4pm

Join us at our St Clare Hospice Light up a Life service.

Light up a Life is a special way to remember and celebrate the life of someone special this December. You will also be supporting St Clare to continue caring for local people facing life-limiting illnesses or experiencing bereavement and loss.

[Click here to donate, or to make your dedication](#)

A Light up a Life service features festive carols and readings for you to enjoy; in the company of those who understand how it feels to miss someone special at Christmas-time. Candles are lit at each service, every shining light representing the life and memories of a loved one.

Everyone, of all faiths and none, is welcome to attend this free service, not just those who have experienced St Clare's support first-hand.

[Click here to find out more about St Clare Hospice](#)

All are Welcome

A Prayer for Advent

From Christian Aid, this prayer was written by Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Lord Jesus Christ
You chose Bethlehem and the Stable
You chose the noble, yet poor, Mary and Joseph
You have chosen us.

We thank you for the gift of yourself to us and
the dynamic and pure love wrapped in that gift.

You ask us to choose to reach out as you did,
and to think beyond ourselves this Christmas
to those in our world whose need is greatest –
to our brothers and sisters living on the very
edge – in often forgotten places.

You made the difference; you call us to make a
difference – to give generously and thoughtfully

BUT not to stop at Christmas.

To make Christmas a new beginning in how we live
and support our brothers and sisters.

As you began in yourself Lord Jesus,
a great personal change over two thousand years
ago, help us to begin a journey of personal change in
how we view and use our wealth and resources,
in relation to the profound needs of others across
our world – your world.

Amen

Church leaders lament lack of urgency at COP27



Church leaders from the United Reformed Church, Baptist Union of Great Britain, and the Methodist Church in Great Britain have joined together to provide the following statement on the conclusion of the COP27 Climate Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, held from 6-20 November:

While we are extremely conscious of the cost-of-living crisis and the economic bearing it is having here in the UK, we cannot ignore the tremendous impact of climate change in other parts of the world and overlook our responsibility towards it.

We continue to look to leaders in the UK and across the world to address the climate emergency with a sense of urgency, fairness and justice.

We are grateful for the vital commitment in Sharm el-Sheikh to establish a “loss and damage” facility. All are impacted by climate change. We have recently seen unprecedented floods in Pakistan and Bangladesh and continued drought in East Africa.

Industrialised countries such as Germany and high-emitting states such as China have seen rivers drying up. But it is low-income countries that are frequently the worst affected by climate related disasters. They simply do not have adequate resources to rebuild shattered infrastructure and livelihoods.

COP27 has seen recognition of the need for compensation for loss and damage rise much higher on the global agenda. We commend states and regions, including Scotland, that have committed early funding to support those who have seen their livelihoods or homes destroyed.

As the recent [UN Environment Programme report](#) has pointed out, limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees requires global emissions to be cut by 45% by 2030. Policies implemented so far suggest that we could be heading for a catastrophic 2.7 degrees of warming.

God’s creation is precious and is vital for the flourishing of all life. We lament the lack of urgency and will to co-operate to address this crisis. COP27 shows that governments have yet to loosen the chains of past practice and vested interests.

World leaders cannot leave this conference believing that they have done enough and must appreciate that there is still much more to do. We pray for a renewed collaboration between people and governments, and that a deeper recognition of our shared humanity might soon lead to the compassionate and just climate action that our world so urgently needs.

MOVING STORIES

Commitment
for **Life**

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

Supporting | our global partners | **FAIRTRADE EDITION**

Facts in Figures on Fairtrade



Prayer for Fairtrade

God of Abundance, help our church to support Fairtrade. Put into leadership business leaders with a conscience. Help them place people before profit.

We pray for Fairtrade across the world but especially in Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Israel and Palestine.

Amen.

UK Retailers commit to Fairtrade

Commitment for Life supports The Fairtrade Foundation who work in partnership with 1.9 million farmers and workers globally to address the root causes of poverty. The good news is that more UK retailers are committed to Fairtrade. “It is inspiring to see that public trust in, and preference for, Fairtrade is at its highest ever,” says Michael Gidney, chief Executive of Fairtrade Foundation.

Lidl is the biggest buyer of Fairtrade cocoa. It rolled out its ‘Way 2 Go’ chocolate across 400 stores. Aldi launched the Choco Changer, a new chocolate bar that commits to Fairtrade’s Living Income Reference Price for cocoa. Aldi also provides opportunities for flower farm workers in Ethiopia to meet objectives on gender equity. Other Fairtrade cocoa conversions were made by SPAR. It introduced three new products on trial. Proper, building on their brand commitment as the ‘only Fairtrade sweet popcorn’ introduced two new Proper Chocolate Popcorn bars, while Asda launched a new FSI cocoa chocolate bar. 100 percent Fairtrade brand Tony’s Chocolonely also launched in major retailers in 2021.

Since 2005, Greggs has sourced Fairtrade coffee beans for all its coffee products. It has since added bananas, apple juice, orange juice, sugar sticks, sugar syrup, hot chocolate, black tea, mint tea, and green tea as part of its Fairtrade commitments. In August 2021, Greggs announced a switch to using only Fairtrade chocolate in its own products, which include Milk Chocolate Cookies, Caramel Shortbread and Chocolate Brownies.

