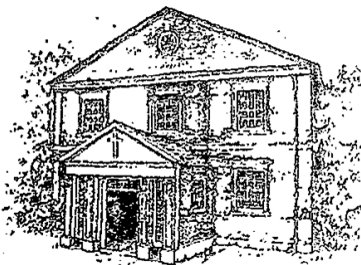
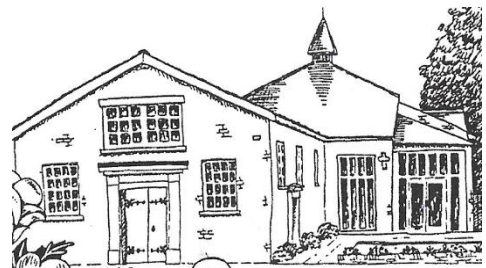


Stepping Stones

Newsletter for

EPPING UNITED
REFORMED CHURCH



ONGAR UNITED
REFORMED CHURCH

May 2023



Sunday 28th May- Ride London Cycle Ride

Due to the cycle ride taking place in our area on Sunday 28th May there will be **no service at Ongar URC** although the church will be open 10:30am to midday. The service at Epping URC will take place as normal but be aware that Epping High Street will be closed but with crossing places for cars and pedestrians at the junctions of Lindsey Street/Stonards Hill and Station Road/St John's Road.

Epping URC News

Coffee Morning

We will be having a coffee morning in aid of Christian Aid Week on Saturday 20th May 10:30am to midday. All Welcome. Please bring raffle prizes.

Zimbabwe

We had a lovely service led by Lindsey about our twinned church in Mbare during which we considered the early followers of Jesus in Acts 2: 42-47, and how they compare to us and our sister church in Mbare. Jesus came so that we might have life in all its fulness (John 10:10) - what does that mean for us in our different contexts? The service was followed by a delicious Zimbabwean fellowship meal.

Lent Lunch

The lent lunch we hosted at the beginning of April was very well attended with 50+ people and we raised £215 for the foodbank. Many thanks to all who helped and attended- it was a lovely afternoon!

May Preaching Plan- All 11am

7th Revd Kathryn Taylor *Holy Communion*

14th Efua Koi-Larbi

21st Fred Arthur

28th Ruzive Mhiribidi

Birthdays

Birthday wishes in May to Daphne, Javad and Jeremy.

Ongar URC News

The URC Daily Devotions which I receive each morning on my phone have been devoted for the past week or so to various Saints. Each day there has been a potted history of the saint, followed by a Bible text, a reflection and a prayer. We all know the four Evangelists and St. Paul, as well as those whose names have been given to local churches – St. Martin, St. Helen, St. James, St. Margaret. Others such as St. Columba, St. George, St. David, St. Patrick and St. Andrew are well-known to many of us, whereas others I have come to learn about due to my interest in Celtic Christianity, such as St. Columbanus, St. Cuthbert, St. Hild and St. Aidan, whose burial place I visited last year in Durham Cathedral during my summer holiday. There are others, however, who were previously unknown to me, such as St. Wilgefortis of Portugal. What has struck me when reading about these saints is their varied backgrounds – some were rough tradesmen such as the fishermen, others were royalty, others were trafficked slaves, while yet others were the children of Christians and unbelievers. Some had huge battles to follow their faith and many suffered terribly, even being crucified themselves. Today the Pope creates new saints, based on miracles carried out in their names, such as St. Theresa.

We in the Reformed Church do not worship saints in the same way as the Roman Catholic Church, seeking their help to perform healing etc. So why, I hear you ask, am I writing about saints and why should our daily devotions be about saints? We have much to learn from the saints of the past, as our Christian faith was spread by many of them at great personal expense. We today do not face the same persecution and problems that they did in following their faith, but there are lessons to be learned in their persistence in not only spreading the faith, but also acting Christian lives devoted to God. I am reminded too that St. Paul in his epistles often referred to ‘the saints’ meaning the believers in a particular place. In Colossians 1: v3-4 he writes: “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints”, and in Philemon v4-7: “I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.”

I pray that we too in our lives may consider all in our fellowship saints, loving them and spreading the faith to others so that they too become saints. May we be encouraged and have our hearts refreshed by the saints in our fellowship. Amen.

Joan

Twinkles

We thought that we were going to have a quiet first morning back after the break, but just before snack time we had a rush of people, so we ended up with 13 adults, two older children and 15 young children. It was amazing how some of the babies had grown during our short break! We also had to put up with one little boy who got quite upset because ‘his girlfriend’ decided to play with one of the older children rather than devoting her time to him – young love!! Thankfully, as Pam was on holiday and Llyris was

in Derbyshire, we had Sandra and Cheryl assisting at what turned out to be a busy morning. We have some regular children, but all too often changing sleep patterns mean we do not see some people for a while until their children change once again. Please pray for this group and its continued service to the community.

Joan

Good Friday Walk of Witness

This year's Walk of Witness followed the usual pattern, but as it was the second time it had been held since the Covid lockdowns, it was better attended than previously, with at the end over 60 people returning to our church and Hall for refreshments. I feel that having the two crosses leading the walk attracted attention, as well as handing out chocolate with a Bible verse. I only know the numbers as we didn't have many hot cross buns left over unlike previously! I want to thank my team of Pam, Sandra, Pat, Angie and Rita for all their hard work as I was doing my 'minister' act welcoming and talking to people. Thanks too to Sandra for doing the reading for me. After expenses, we were able to put about £26 to the DEC appeals for Ukraine, Turkey and Syria.

Joan

We would like to wish "Happy Birthday" to all who have a birthday in May.

Services During May, 11am

7th Revd John Buxton

14th Joan Smith

21st Penny Bloom

28th **No Service**- Ride London Essex cycle ride- church will be open 10:30am-12pm

4th June Revd Kathryn Taylor *Sacrament of Holy Communion*

URC Eastern Synod

SAVE THE DATE!!!

FAITH IN ACTION DAY AT EPPING URC

SATURDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER

Epping URC will be hosting the Synod's Faith in Action day which will be a day of workshops, talks and youth activities on social justice topics from a variety of speakers. All are welcome.

More details to be announced- speak to Jeremy for more information.



Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area

**Leaside Church &
Community Centre**



Come and celebrate with us at Leaside

Watch the Coronation our big screen TV

Saturday 6th May from 9.30am

Free Tea, Coffee & Soft Drinks

Bring you own lunch

All are welcome



Come join the Celebration!



**A Christ the King Picnic
in the Stow Park**

Harlow CM20 3HB



Celebrating the King's Coronation

Saturday 13th May, 11 am to 3 pm

Entertainment, Worship Service, Food

A community event organised by St Andrew's Methodist Church

**Monies raised at the event will be going to the
Turkey-Syrian Earthquake Appeal and to Christian Aid**

URC Celebrates its Jubilee

Members, ministers and friends of the United Reformed Church gathered in London on 15 April to mark the denomination's 50th anniversary.

Around 1,200 people attended the rail strike-postponed celebrations at Methodist Central Hall Westminster, the same place that English Congregationalists and Presbyterians gathered on 5 October 1972 to vote the URC into being.



Decorations created by members of the URC hung around the hall, a sounding trumpet heralded the beginning of the service, as in 1972, celebration of communion, and artwork from across the denomination was displayed in colourful presentation.

Led by the Revd John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC, and the Moderator and Moderator-Elect of the URC General Assembly, the Revds Fiona Bennett and Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, the service reflected the denomination's past, present and future, as well as its place in the world Church.

The Revd Richard Church, former Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) who four years ago helped to start conversations about how to celebrate the URC's 50th anniversary said: "It's great to be here and it's great to see that it's actually happened and I'm massively admiring of the people who have gone through two false starts to get us to this point, but then the URC is a church that's used to false starts.

"We thought we were being set up for the unity of the wider Christian body in the country and it hasn't quite worked out that way. So, this is a good 50th birthday party."

Former General Secretary the Revd Dr David Cornick, URC and Council for World Mission (CWM) scholar Victoria Turner, and the Revd Professor Jooseop Keum, CWM's General Secretary, each delivered a sermon, and a specially formed Jubilee Choir sang 'Always trust the star that guides us on the way', Neil Thorogood's winning poem in the 50th Anniversary Worship Resources Competition, in a setting by Scott Stroman.

Other music in the service also included Colin Thompson's competition-winning hymn, 'God of the Pilgrim Way'.

The range of those leading worship reflected all generations within the URC, both lay and ordained, including Church Related Community Workers and leaders of the URC Youth Assembly.

Lundie Memorial Award winner Poppy Thorpe and trainee minister Joe Amoah read from scripture, while Karen Campbell, URC Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries, performed her own poetic cry of welcome – ‘A table for all’.

The Revd Margaret Ali, Minister of Islington and Rectory Road URCs, said: “It’s a pleasure to be here. I think I am adding colour to the URC because it’s a diverse church and I represent diversity. That’s what I am here for and praising God, and I’m able to do ministry wonderfully.”

Two hundred and forty people also toured Church House, the URC’s London office and Lumen URC to experience the wide-ranging life of the URC, represented by different ministries, exhibitions, and creative and learning opportunities for all ages.

Philippa Osei, URC Youth Moderator 2023-2024 said: “It was brilliant. It was really nice to see different facets of Church in one place.”

Heather Moore, URC Youth Moderator-Elect 2023-2024, added: “There was so much more there than I thought there was going to be and so much more that I didn’t realise happened at Church House; you have Greenbelt, Trussell Trust, Commitment for Life, It was really good to see all of that at one time in one space.”

Watch the service here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34bymAfzws0&embeds_euri=https%3A%2F%2Furc.org.uk%2F&feature=emb_imp_woyt

Christian Aid Week

14th-20th May



With the support of many different Churches throughout the country, Christian Aid has been working with victims of war, natural disasters, poverty, climate change and oppression for over seventy years. Now as the effects of climate change add to the pressures on the world’s most vulnerable communities Christian Aid’s work is more important than ever.

Christian Aid doesn’t believe in handouts. Its aim is always to work with local partners to help communities to help themselves, setting up programmes which empower people, especially women, to reap the harvest of their own hard work.

Every year Christian Aid chooses one or two examples to focus our minds on their work. This year the focus is on Malawi and on two strong women, Jen and Esther. Christian Aid has been working in Malawi for almost twenty years. Its programmes cover a range of areas including economic justice, gender inequality, community health, reconciliation and peace making. But climate change and resilience is at the forefront of its work in Malawi.

It aims to strengthen the ability of communities to adapt, transform and respond to climate change.

Meanwhile, Malawi, like all of us, has been suffering from inflation especially since the war in Ukraine. Food, fuel, fertiliser and school fees have doubled in price in the last 12 months. And hard-working farmers are seeing their harvests fail as the climate crisis brings increasingly erratic weather.

The impact of the recent Cyclone Freddy in Malawi has been devastating. This is the longest-lasting tropical cyclone on record (lasting 34 days), the equivalent of a of a full North Atlantic hurricane season. Malawi experienced a year's worth of rain during the 4-week cyclone. Floods have washed away crops, over 500,000 people have been displaced and hundreds have lost their lives. There's also an increased risk of malaria and cholera in the immediate aftermath. Christian Aid is at its most powerful when a disaster happens. It will be there long after the flood waters recede, helping families build back.

Pigeon Peas

This Christian Aid Week Appeal introduces us to pigeon peas, otherwise known as yellow split peas, a hardy crop which can resist drought and floods and is highly nutritious. Jen and her husband have two acres of pigeon peas, but they are struggling with the effects of the climate crisis. The rainfall is unreliable, and there are more storms, flooding and stronger winds. Jen's two oldest sons have both gained places at college, but the fees and the price of uniforms are rising along with everything else, and she can only afford to send one of her sons to college unless she can increase her income. A terrible choice to have to make. 'My heart longs to see our children finish school,' says Jen. 'These dreams are very important to me, because by doing so, I'll be sure that I am creating a good future for the children.' The pigeon pea is a tough plant, able to withstand a lot – just like Jen. But to make the most of her crop, Jen needs to plant good quality seeds and sell for the best price possible, and not to unscrupulous middlemen. Your gift could help farmers like Jen plant better seeds, secure a fairer price for their crops, and build happier futures for their children. The pigeon pea is a tough plant, able to withstand a lot – just like Jen. But to make the most of her crop, Jen needs to plant good quality seeds and sell for the best price possible, and not to unscrupulous middlemen. Your gift could help farmers like Jen plant better seeds, secure a fairer price for their crops, and build happier futures for their children.

Jen and her family are safe but had to abandon their home due to flooding. Some of her crops were destroyed. Jen reports that she has lost the equivalent of '2 bags' of yield, worth at least £79. These are vital funds that she'd planned to use to pay for the secondary school fees of one of her children. Esther Saizi is another woman who uses the income from pigeon peas to support her family. She aims to buy tools for her daughter Ziwone's carpentry business, pay the fees for her daughter Rashida to graduate as a nurse and send her two little grandsons to nursery. For 10 years, Esther grew pigeon peas on her farm, but she could never secure a fair price for her crop. In 2021 Cyclone Ana washed away her crops, leaving her feeling desperate. But when Esther joined a pigeon

pea programme run by Christian Aid's local partner, Nandolo Farmers Association, and started selling as part of a cooperative, she was able to earn much more. I was able to sell the pigeon peas at a better price with a better market,' she explains. 'It provided financial stability.' Through the cooperative and its equipment, Esther can bake pigeon pea flour bread and boost her income - and also make fish food, using a special machine provided by Christian Aid. With the money she's making, Esther has been able to feed her family and support her two daughters, and also acquire a herd of 13 goats, who provide manure for her crops, saving on expensive fertilizer, store her pigeon peas in a warehouse, safe from floods and storms, and buy a sewing machine. Your gifts this May will continue to support the pigeon pea project and other vital work around the world.

Read more and to donate click here: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

Eco Tip: No Mow May



We've lost nearly 97% of flower rich meadows since the 1970's and with them gone are vital food needed by pollinators, like bees and butterflies.

A healthy lawn with some long grass and wildflowers benefits wildlife, tackles pollution and can even lock away carbon below ground – and best of all, to reap these benefits all you have to do is not mow your lawn in May!

With over 20 million gardens in the UK, even the smallest grassy patches add up to a significant proportion of our land which, if managed properly, can deliver enormous gains for nature, communities and the climate.

Coronation Day: URC Prays for King & Queen

As we approach a time of national rejoicing, the United Reformed Church (URC) prays that Almighty God will bless Their Majesties the King and Queen when they are crowned at Westminster Abbey on 6 May and grant them every happiness in their new roles.

At the heart of the Coronation is a service where the King will be anointed in a rite going back to the earliest days of the, English, monarchy. The Church of England, as the established *English* Church, has the honour, and burden, of presiding – with other denominations, and religious traditions, getting cameo parts.

In a typically British piece of ritual, much pomp and ceremony will take place to anoint and crown someone to a purely symbolic office with no real independent power. Such authority that the King has can only be exercised with the advice, and consent, of the

government. Such guidance and advice that the King may give to ministers is necessarily private and, of course, can easily be ignored.

The URC stands in a tradition of British Christianity which was, at best, rather ambivalent about the monarchy.

Our spiritual ancestors welcomed the Commonwealth in the Civil War era and argued, after all, for the execution of Charles I! Passages in the Old Testament which showed God warning against the Jewish people establishing a monarchy were used as guidance in the Civil War era and the identification of the monarchy with the Church of England added another layer of complexity to our history.

Thankfully, the turmoil of those years is long behind us and, in a much more secular age, differences between Christian denominations are less acute. The URC, and its antecedents, were – and are – eager to play a key part in the civic life of our nations; each year we continue a long tradition of sending an Address To The Throne from our General Assembly where we comment on the issues of the day, presumably in the hope that His Majesty will send those comments on to various government departments.

In our contemporary society, and certainly within our congregations, there are a variety of views on the monarchy, yet we can unite in wishing Their Majesties The King and Queen well today.

We pray that they will feel God's presence as they are anointed and throughout His Majesty's reign. We hope that they will use their office well and use their voices at the centre for those on the margins of our bitterly divided society. We pray that His Majesty The King reminds us of the importance of spirituality and religion in the lives of our nations. Above all, the URC commends their Majesties, The King and Queen, to God's care and protection.

Prayer

Eternal God,
You order and govern our world and all that is therein,
bless, we pray, Charles and Camilla today
as they are crowned and anointed,
that amid the pomp and ritual,
they may feel your loving presence,
that they may fulfil the roles prescribed for them,
and that we may, in this kingdom, be better governed,
and always reminded of your eternal Kingdom which is to come.
Amen.

At Epping URC we have copies of a commemorative book from Hope Together which opens with full colour, illustrated pages explaining the symbolism and Christian meaning in the Coronation. It then points to Jesus the King of Kings and invites people to find out

more by reading the Gospel of Matthew- available on the front table & available to buy here: https://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/393602/The_Kings_Coronation.aspx

