

STEPPING STONES

March 2022



EPPING METHODIST CHURCH
EPPING UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
NORTH WEALD METHODIST CHURCH
ONGAR UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Minister

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Rest day Monday

From the Minister

Tuesday 1st March marks the eve of the Lenten devotion observed by many Christians worldwide. We call that day Shrove Tuesday which is from the old English word 'scrifan' where something is imposed as a penance, i.e., 'a punishment inflicted on oneself as an outward expression of one's repentance for wrongdoing' (*Online Dictionary*). To be shaven is to have 'presented oneself to a priest for confession, penance, and absolution' (*ibid.*). It all sounds heavy stuff and something that our traditions, whether Methodist or Reformed, tend not to entertain. We have made Shrove Tuesday into a self-indulgent feast (pancakes) rather than an occasion to cleanse our souls before the Lenten fast starting on Ash Wednesday. For some, however, Shrove Tuesday is a helpful precursor to how one handles the season of Lent with its disciplines.

Throughout this edition of *Stepping Stones* you will see pointers to Lenten observance: quotes, book recommendations, and Lent Group dates and times. It is a deliberate attempt on your Minister's part to infuse what we are reading with wisdom, encouragement and prayer alongside regular contributions.

I wish all readers a blessed Lent and mark you with this Cross



We follow Christ in his desert temptations and as he wends his way inexorably to his Cross and Resurrection.

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all who are penitent:
Create and make in us new and contrite hearts,
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may obtain from you, the God of mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



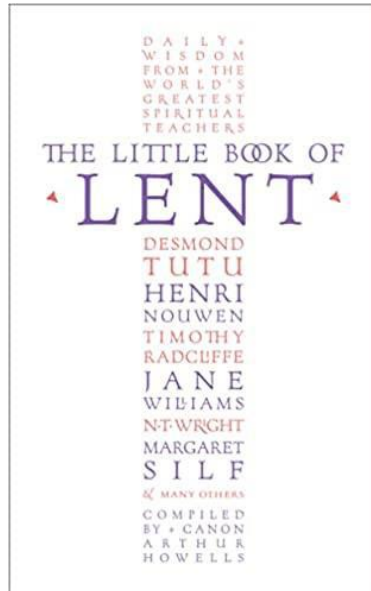
A Lenten Quote:

"God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy"

Pope Francis

Two book suggestions for lent

To aid us on our journey through Lent the Minister recommends two books which you may wish to purchase. Give one of them a go and have some spiritual food!



A Little Book of Lent compiled by Canon Arthur Howells

Kindle edition £2.99 Paperback £4.99

The Little Book of Lent is a powerful anthology of readings from spiritual writers for each day of Lent, with accompanying scripture and prayers to help guide daily reflections.



Celtic Lent by David Cole

Kindle Edition £6.79 Paperback £6.79

This inspirational book takes the reader through the 40 days of Lent to the celebration of Easter through the eyes and beliefs of Celtic Christianity.

Drawing on primary sources of pastoral letters, monastic rules and the theological teaching of the Celtic church, the author presents a different perspective on the cross of Christ and draws us to see our own life journeys with a new and transforming vision.

Epping Methodist Church



A LENT GROUP AT

EPPING UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

(With Epping Methodist Church)

Thursdays at 10am

10th March: Jesus guided by Scripture

17th March: Jesus serving with gladness

24th March: Jesus sharing bread

31st March: Jesus praying

7th April: Jesus generous under pressure

All are Welcome



A Lenten Quote:

“Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring.”

St Catherine of Sienna

Epping United Reformed Church



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All are Welcome

Zimbabwe News

We are pleased to hear the great news that Blantina Chemvumi, who we have been sponsoring a term a year for her teacher training qualification has successfully passed. It has been rather delayed due to the pandemic but she has finally finished and will take up a teaching position in a school in Harare.

Please remember in your prayers also our sister church in Mbare who we have heard from recently that they are now returning back to some normality following the pandemic.

Big Day Out

The Eastern Synod big day out is on 16th July at Trinity Park, Ipswich and is promising to be an exciting day based on the URC's 50th Anniversary. For those of you who were able to attend the last Big Day Out you may remember it as a rich day of activities and workshops and worship for all ages. Ongar URC is organising a coach for the day and have kindly offered to take anyone from us who would like to go, for anyone interested, there will be a sign-up sheet at the back of the church or speak to Lindsey. The full programme is being finalised, and a booking form with more details will be available shortly.

Birthday wishes in March to Melissa, Jo and Stephen.

North Weald Methodist Church



A LENT GROUP AT NORTH WEALD METHODIST CHURCH

Fridays at 10am

11th March: Jesus guided by Scripture

18th March: Jesus serving with gladness

25th March: Jesus sharing bread

1st April: Jesus praying

8th April: Jesus generous under pressure

All are Welcome



A Lenten Quote:

“O Lord, make this Lenten season different from the other ones. Let me find you again. Amen.” *Henri Nouwen*

Ongar United Reformed Church



A LENT GROUP AT

ONGAR UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Tuesdays at 11am

Tuesday 8th March: Jesus guided by Scripture

Tuesday 15th March: Jesus serving with gladness

Tuesday 22nd March: Jesus sharing bread

Tuesday 29th March: Jesus praying

Tuesday 5th April: Jesus generous under pressure

All are Welcome

At the time of writing this, war has broken out in Ukraine and the capital, Kyiv, is threatened by danger on the ground and from the skies. While I was reflecting on my sermon this week in what seemed to me to be the Devil at work in Vladimir Putin, I came across an article regarding Kyiv and its position in the Eastern Orthodox Church, which I thought was worth a mention here.

There was a Prince of Kiev, in the 10th century, also called Vladimir, who spent many years as a pagan, but then decided he wanted to discover which was the 'true faith'. So, he sent envoys to various lands to find out more about the religious practices of each: the Latins of Rome, the Kazar Jewish community and the Muslims of Bulgaria. Each of these envoys reported back, but in each case with qualifications about what they had seen and experienced. In turn Vladimir decided that none of these would be the faith he would adopt.

However, those who were sent to Constantinople, the home of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, visited the great church of Haghia Sophia in the city and were overwhelmed by their experiences. As they put it on their return to Vladimir: 'Then we went to Constantinople and they led us to the place where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven

or earth, for on earth there is no such vision nor beauty, and we do not know how to describe it; we only know that God dwells among human beings. We cannot forget that beauty'.

When he heard the report of the envoys to Constantinople Vladimir was so moved that he himself was baptized as a member of the Orthodox Church and, (as was current then) ensured that the lands that he ruled also followed this faith. From this beginning Eastern Orthodoxy travelled eastwards throughout Russia to become the normative faith of the people of that land, and Vladimir became viewed as the founding father of the Russian Orthodox Church. As a result, the city of Kiev itself is seen by many Russian Orthodox Christians as the 'mother city' of their faith. In 2019 Patriarch Kirill of Moscow even suggested that for the Russian people Kiev played the role that Jerusalem had for many other Christians.

Let us all pray for the people of Ukraine and Russia and earnestly beseech God to turn that other Vladimir (Putin) away from his path of destruction giving Kiev the honour that the church he claims to belong to accords it in its history. We have all seen the skyline of Kiev on the news and noticed the magnificent gilded domes of its churches. May they be preserved so that in a free Ukraine people will be able to visit them and worship God there.

As you may be aware, I am acting as a mentor for Arthur Revels, who is following the Methodist Local Preachers course. Arthur was a member at Trinity URC, which sadly closed, and is now at St. Andrew's Methodist Church in Harlow. During the coming months he will be taking a larger part in the services for which I am planned and we will also be taking those services on the new plan which are down as Prayer and Praise services. Please encourage Arthur with positive feedback and sharing God's love with him.

Joan

Church Meeting

Our next Church Meeting will be after the service on Sunday, 27th March. We decided to cancel the planned meeting in January due to the dark evenings and the likely bad weather, leading to poor attendance. As I am leading worship in Bishop's Stortford on that day, I may not be back in Ongar by the time your worship ends, so there will be light refreshments in the Hall before the meeting so that I can be present to take the Minutes. Please note this date in your diaries now and ensure that you can attend.

Joan

Big Day Out

As you will know if you have heard the Notices, this will be at Trinity Park, Ipswich, on 16th July, and forms part of the celebrations of the 50th year of the United Reformed Church. Brenda is organizing a coach for anyone interested in taking part in the day and there is a list on the table at the back of the church for you to sign to indicate your interest. The last time this was held (two were cancelled during Covid) it was a very enjoyable day which culminated in an inspiring act of worship.

Twinkles

We are now planning for our charity morning on 17th March for Red Nose Day and, despite it being in Lent, there will, I am sure, be much cake to be eaten and appreciated! If anyone would like to donate a prize for our raffle, this would be much appreciated.

The following week, 24th March, we will finish for Easter with a short service in the church and our usual Easter egg hunt, hoping that they are returned so they can be shared out equally at the end of the morning!

We are still welcoming new children and their carers, especially as the older ones leave to go to nursery school. Since we re-opened last year many of the carers, and their partners too, have become good friends, sharing their family news with us all, as well as their concerns about their children. As our current children are all quite young, we look forward to them being with us for some time and getting to know everyone better.

Joan

Open House

We are pleased to say that Open House continues to be busy on Wednesday mornings. It is lovely to greet our friends from around Ongar, all getting together to share news over a cup of tea/coffee and a biscuit. There is always an opportunity for quiet meditation in the Church during the morning.

Our Charity table for January and February has been in aid of Diabetes and thanks go to everyone as we raised £75.00 for this charity. During March our charity table will be supporting The Michael Roberts Charitable Trust in aid of local food banks.

Pam

Coffee Morning

The Coffee Morning & Sale held on Saturday February 27th raised £173.80 which is going to Girl's Brigade England & Wales.

The March Coffee Morning will be held on Saturday 26th. This will include our popular Easter Tombola, donations of Easter Eggs and anything chocolate will be appreciated.

Sandra

We would like to wish happy birthday to all those having a birthday in March.



” Apart from the cross, there is no other ladder
by which we may go to heaven.”

St Rose of Lima

Churches Together in Epping and District

Lent Lunches 2022, 12.30pm

Sat. 5th March
Epping Methodist Church, High Street.

Sat. 12th March
United Reformed Church, Lindsey Street

Sat. 19th March
Epping Green Chapel

Sat. 26th March
Life Church, The Box, St John's Road

Sat. 2nd April
Roman Catholic Church, Church Hill

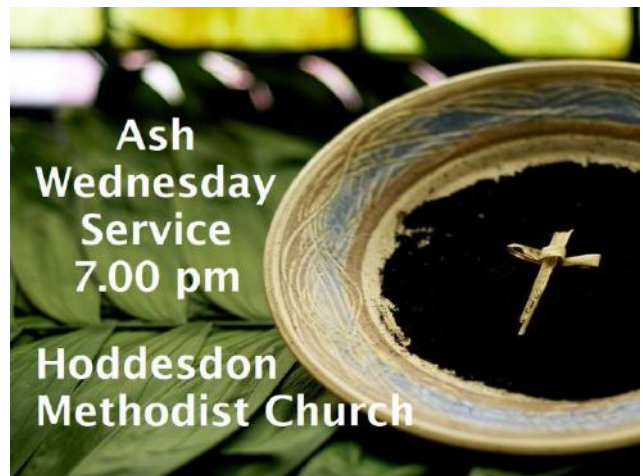
Sat. 9th April
St John's Church, St John's Road Epping

Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area

Ash Wednesday service at Hoddesdon Methodist Church

A warm invitation is extended by Hoddesdon Methodist Church for their Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday 2nd March at 7pm. This is a united service with St Catherine's & St Paul's and St Cuthbert's Churches. All are welcome!

Hoddesdon Methodist Church
Middlefield Road, Hoddesdon,
EN11 9ED



World Day of Prayer Service at Hatfield Heath URC

You are warmly invited to join us at Hatfield Heath United Reformed Church at 2pm on Friday 4 March, for a joint service across all of our local villages as part of the 🙏 WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 🙏 Refreshments and fellowship will follow the service.

During the service we will be saying special prayers for the Ukraine population and the mainly people in Russia who are protesting against this invasion. We will also be praying for many countries, including our own, where poverty, hunger and lack of a safe environment are sadly the norm.

The World Day of Prayer aims to demonstrate that prayer and actions are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence in the world. Please share this message with your friends — everyone is welcome to this Day of Prayer 🤝

A lent resource from Haebea

Lent is just around the corner with Ash Wednesday falling on 2 March.

Rather than giving up chocolate or biscuits, why not give thanks for all the good things in your life by counting the blessings God has given you...

Count your blessings...



We hope that you will be able to use the calendar of blessings during Lent as part of your Lenten discipleship. The amounts for each 'blessing' are just a suggestion, so you can adjust them to suit your situation.

Click here for the resource: <https://www.haebea.org/news/newsroom/count-you-blessings.html>



Father, help me to see this holy season of Lent as a time of spiritual renewal, rather than a time of deprivation. Motivate me to reach a new level of experiencing your grace.

Epping Forest Foodbank

<https://eppingforest.foodbank.org.uk/>

The foodbank is currently seeing very high demand for its services with the numbers of people requiring the support of the foodbank continually increasing. The foodbank also supports the families of children who receive free school meals during the school holidays. The foodbank needs our support with donations of food and other items with the following being in particular need at the moment:

- UHT Long-life milk
- Long life juice
- Tinned Tomatoes
- Tinned Meat
- Rice Pudding
- Custard
- Packet Noodles
- Instant Mash
- Tinned pasta
- Snack/breakfast bars
- Jam
- Chocolate spread
- Sponge Puddings
- Chocolate bars
- Coffee
- Condiments
- Reusable face masks
- Toilet Paper
- Laundry powder/tablets
- Razors
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Washing Up Liquid
- Hand Sanitizer

There is a donation point at Epping URC which can be accessed on a Sunday morning and other times when the building is open and there are the following donation points around the district:

- Foodbank warehouse, Oakwood Hill, Loughton (Open Wednesday & Friday 10am-12pm)
- Epping Forest District Council Offices (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)

- Epping Catholic Church (Porch daily 8am-8pm)
- Epping Tesco
- Theydon Bois Baptist Church (Fridays 10am-12pm)
- St Mary's Church, Theydon Bois Vicarage (Daily 10am-4pm)
- St Mary's Church, Loughton (Monday-Fridays 9:15am- 12:45pm)
- St John's Church, Loughton (Daily 9am-6pm)
- St Edmunds RC Church, Loughton (Daily 8am-8pm)
- All Saints Church, Chigwell Row (Thursdays 10:30am-12pm & Sundays 8:30am- 12pm)
- Buckhurst Hill Waitrose
- Woodford Co-op

A Prayer for Ukraine



A prayer for Ukraine

God of all,
with alarm and concern we bring before you
the military intervention in Ukraine.

In a world you made for peace and flourishing,
we lament the use of armed force.

We mourn every casualty in this conflict,
every precious life extinguished by war.
We pray comfort for those who grieve
and those who are fearful.

Hear our longing that leaders and nations
will honour the worth of all people
by having the courage
to resolve conflict through dialogue.

May all our human failings be transformed
by your wonderful grace and goodness.

We ask this in the name of Christ,
the author of peace and sustainer of creation.

Amen

24 February 2022: A prayer from the Joint Public Issues Team. The text may be shared and reproduced for non-commercial purposes. For all other uses, contact enquiries@jointpublicissues.org.uk Image from Zephyrka on Pixabay

All We Can and the Methodist Church in Britain have launched an emergency appeal in response to events unfolding in Ukraine.

As communities face violence, upheaval, and the trauma of war, your urgent support is needed. Working together with the Global Relationships Team of the Methodist Church in Britain, donations will be used to support the response to the crisis happening in Ukraine, and ensure that critical humanitarian assistance is available to those who need it.

Please pray for the people of Ukraine today, and give all you can to the Ukraine Emergency Appeal. Your gift today will be used to meet emergency needs.

<https://www.allwecan.org.uk/donate/ukraine/>



Joel 2:12-13

The Lord says, "Return to me now, while there is time! Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts."

Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.

World Day of Prayer 2022



"I know the plans I have for you"

4th March 2022

2022 is a special year for World Day of Prayer in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This year, we have prepared the World Day of Prayer service. It has been both challenging and rewarding to write about the three countries that make up our area: our landscape, people and culture all shaped by our history. We celebrate our diversity and the contribution made to our countries by the many groups and individuals who have made their home here. We use our Bible text "I know the plans I have for you" from Jeremiah to reflect on some of the issues facing



us today: poverty, domestic abuse and disability, finding hope in difficult situations and encouragement in the help we can give to each other.

World Day of Prayer is an international ecumenical organisation which enables women all over the world to share the ideas and concerns of the writing country. Preparation for the day has taken several years. Our International Committee based in New York coordinates the work of National Committees and facilitates the creation of our annual World Day of Prayer service on the first Friday in March. The service outline, created by the writing country, is distributed to the rest of the world, along with a Bible reflection, country background and children's and - for the first time - young people's activities.

All this work will come to fruition on Friday 4th March 2022 when services will take place beginning in Samoa and moving on through New Zealand and Australia, across Asia, Africa and Europe and finally the United States and South America before finishing in American Samoa. Across England, Wales and Northern Ireland services will take place in large urban centres, such as Central Hall Westminster, and in remote village churches. We will use modern technology to reach those unable to access a service but hope to be able to extend a welcome and hospitality once released from lockdown.

More details here: <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

Our nearest service will be at Hatfield Heath United Reformed Church on Friday 4th March at 2pm, All Welcome.



"Lent is like a long retreat during which we can turn back into ourselves and listen to the voice of God, in order to defeat the temptations of the Evil One."
Pope Benedict XVI