

STEPPING STONES *November 2021*

Epping Methodist Church – Epping URC- North Weald Methodist Church- Ongar URC

Minister: Revd Cecil White. cewhaebea@gmail.com 07483147441 Rest Day Monday

From the Minister

Remember, remember....

November holds a special place for me because it is my birth month. Consequently, I have always felt a warm glow during chill, dank November days. Some may find the month dour and drab, but I tend to feel glad and celebratory – which may have something to do with the fact that, apart from my birthday, it is close to Christmas and all that that means.

My birthday aside, November has other traditions, e.g., Bonfire Night (not that we should be celebrating a Catholic's execution in 1605). More poignantly it is what one might call a month of remembrance. Christian festivity marks the first two days of the month: All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. These festivals can sometimes get muddled, and, in our traditions, they don't usually feature at all. They do, however, in other traditions help to bring a note of celebration and thankfulness.

All Saints' Day marks the remembrance of the church's saints. This has more significance to Catholic and Anglican traditions but there is no harm in our taking part. Some famous saints are recalled such as St Francis of Assisi or St Catherine of Sienna (look them up and discover more).

All Souls' Day marks the commemoration of 'the faithful departed'. This is quite different and may include the remembrance of a loved one or one who influenced you in your faith, e.g. a Sunday School teacher or a parent. These are the unsung heroes of the faith who are celebrated exclusively by us as individuals.

Remembrance Sunday plays its part in November also. It is held in the United Kingdom as a day to commemorate the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian personnel in the two World Wars and later conflicts.

And if November hasn't got enough remembrance, this year we also take time to remember our planet. November sees the hosting by the United Kingdom of COP 26: the 26th United Nations Climate Change conference in Glasgow. Sadly, we are facing a climate crisis that is causing death to flora and fauna across the world. Let's remember to pray for a breakthrough.

November has much to offer us as it punctuates the year with helpful recollection. So, remember, remember.... commemorate, commemorate.... celebrate, celebrate!

Epping Methodist Church

Our first meeting of Women's Fellowship was held on a very wet Tuesday in September and 10 ladies braved the weather to join us. It was lovely catching up with everyone after nearly 18 months. We have welcomed old and new members to our new venue in the church. Everyone has commented on how lovely and cosy it seems in there and how it is so easy to access with the ramp! The next meeting will be on Tuesday 9th November at 2.00pm and the speaker will be Rosemary from the Leprosy Mission who will be bringing some slides to show us. The meetings last for an hour, tea and biscuits are served and all ladies are very welcome.

Coffee mornings have resumed on the 1st Saturday of the month at 10-12 noon in the Church Hall. Again, it was lovely to see friends after a long break and hearing all their news. Our next coffee morning is on Saturday 6th November.

Birthday wishes to all our friends celebrating this month.

Ongar United Reformed Church

A Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving

This will be on **Saturday, 6th November at 2 .30pm**. Although we do not have a traditional All Souls' service, it was decided that this year we would hold a special service to remember those who have died, particularly during the past time of Covid. It will be a discreet and meaningful service led by our Minister, Cecil. You are invited to bring your private memories and thoughts, perhaps of long-lost parents and grandparents, siblings, a child or a friend or a former work colleague. This service will be followed by refreshments.

-O-

Doug Kelly's funeral will be held at our Church on the 11th November at 1pm

The Late Mrs. Mary King

On Tuesday, 19th October, Mary was cremated at a private family service at Chelmsford Crematorium, which was followed by a service of remembrance and thanksgiving for her life at St. Mary's, High Ongar, both services being led by Rev. Stewart Gibbs. The church was full with many of Mary's friends having come from long distances to pay their respects. The service began with the family entering with the flowers from her cremation and placing them before the altar and there were also flowers around the church from organisations both she and Derek had belonged to. There were many Austin

7s outside the church as they were both members of the Austin 7 club and she loved her own car, pictures of which were on the order of service. We remember her for her organ and piano playing in this church, as well as her willingness to lead intercessional prayer and do Bible readings. She had a great love for this church despite being committed to St. Mary's, through her father's strong Protestant faith and churchgoing.

There were two hymns – Amazing Grace and Love Divine all loves excelling – and incidental music reflecting Mary's love for music. Donations were taken for the Cats' Protection charity, reflecting Mary's love of animals. It was a very moving service with contributions from friends and relatives, with an address from Stewart underlining her Christian faith and her commitment to churches within the immediate area and elsewhere. It was clear during the eulogy and reflections how much the family suffered from the car accident, for which she was blameless, and how they feel that this led to her being taken from them prematurely.

The service was followed by refreshments at the Ivy Hill Hotel, Margaretting, which gave friends and family a chance to chat and share memories of Mary. Our condolences go in particular to Derek, Stephanie and Tedge, and all her family.

Joan and Keith

Twinkles

Since we re-opened, we have welcomed around 15 adults and a similar number of children, although our weekly attendance is nearer 8 adults. The majority of these are new faces and it is good to know how much we are appreciated in not only the town but the wider area. Our team now consists of Joan, Pam, Llyris, Sandra and, on occasions, Cheryl and Georgina. Our thanks also go to Angie for helping to put the toys out on a Wednesday after Open House and away on a Thursday.

We had decided not to have a charity coffee morning until we were better established but, when the Children in Need pack dropped through my letterbox, this seemed a sign that we should use the opportunity to raise money for charity. It was put to the adults present and explained what we had previously done on such mornings. Some of those present were very keen to explain what a good morning it was, emphasizing in particular the cakes!! So, it has been decided that we will have a coffee morning, with cakes and raffle, on Thursday, 18th November, the proceeds going to Children in Need. If anyone would like to donate a raffle prize or cake, please speak to Joan.

Joan

Thoughts from Joan

This week in preparing my service for Hatfield Heath I have given much thought to symbols in the church. The reading from Deuteronomy talks about

writing God's commands on your gates and door posts, as well as keeping them on your hands and foreheads. These are meant to remind you of God every time you pray. We too, even in the Protestant tradition, have symbols in the Cross and Fish. However, like everything that we have around us daily, do we begin to take this sort of thing for granted or does it in itself become an item of worship for us? The Jews still have a mezuzah, containing a scroll with God's commands, on their door post but an internet search easily reveals how these for some may have become a kind of status symbol rather than what was originally intended. I am sure that many become painted over and are then left forgotten when the occupants move house and buy perhaps a better and more ornate one for their new home. We, too, can easily take the symbols of our faith for granted. Roman Catholics have a holy water stoup at the entrance to each church, usually dipping their fingers into it and crossing themselves on entering but do they stop to think of the meaning of the cross and that they are repeating an action reflecting their own baptism into the Church of Christ? In our tradition we have very few things that we do automatically in our worship, but our act of worship each Sunday has in itself become a tradition. Just as God commanded the Jews to remember his commands, how often do we take the time in Church, or even in our busy lives, to just sit in silence and concentrate on God's presence? Do we need to de-clutter our churches and our Christian lives to concentrate more on our love of God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, and seek the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Is retaining a flower vase or table given to the church in the thirties, for example, helping us to worship God and to bring His message to others around us? Please look around you in church and think about your surroundings, what they mean to you and whether they are more important to you than God himself and His work for you.

Joan

Coffee Mornings

It has been suggested that we have some variety in future Coffee Mornings. Rather than the same people organising them, we have a rota. We will still need our regular helpers; many hands make light work! There is a list on the notice board please choose the months convenient to you and you can have your own theme for the morning. Funds raised will go to your chosen charity.

Charity Fundraising

There is also a list on the noticeboard for suggestions of Charities you would like to benefit from our fundraising. Please put your names & suggestions on both lists which are located on the board in the Hall Entrance Porch.

Sandra

Open House – Every Wednesday 10am – 12 Noon

After a long break caused by the hall improvements work, and then Covid – we are pleased that Open House is now back in business and we are ready to welcome you again.

It has taken many years of hard fundraising work, and generous donations to achieve these necessary results – including repairs to the hall floor, and improvements to the kitchen and toilet facilities, plus the re-siting of the historic Taylor Family grave stone. We will continue to have a small table with items of sale for charity work. The charity we raised funds for during October was St. Clare's Hospice. It's more of a challenge these days to get folk to buy items donated for sale as many of us have developed a 'declutter' attitude over the past year. However, with a bit of encouragement & showing off the most useful or beautiful, plus the banter of the not so beautiful, we will be sending £50 donation to the St. Clare's Hospice. Interestingly we heard that a lot of our visitors already support the Hospice in the form of their lottery which is wonderful since the service is of great help to so many poorly people.

During November we will be joining with others to support Children in Need.

Jean and Cheryl

Epping United Reformed Church

Message from Peter Jones

I am now happily settled in an exceptionally pretty area a bit north of Braintree. Partridges sit on the garden fence and the local herd of deer charge across the field beyond. The welcoming C of E community here are firmly evangelical, the village seems entirely on first name terms. Driving thirty odd miles to Epping Church is not practical, but the distance cannot obliterate the love you displayed to Pamela and myself on our arrival twelve years ago. Unfortunately she became seriously ill straight afterwards.

Typically, Margaret became her instant friend and for those first few weeks made her life happy and memorable. When she passed into glory four years ago, I and my children will never forget that Church service that Claire, Lindsey and Karin arranged, and which embodied your affection. The Church will always be foremost in my thoughts. Best wishes to everyone.

MOVING STORIES

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Prayer Time

Heaven and earth are filled with your praises, O Creator God! You taught us to love the lilies, the birds, and our neighbour. Help us forgive all debt as You taught us in prayer; to lives beyond the reaches of unjust economic systems that devastate the earth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

No Debt @COP26

We pray for a big commitment to be made at COP 26 for the unconditional cancellation of debt for the global south. This will help countries invest in climate adaptation and mitigation, and help frontline communities stay in their homes as Climate Chaos threatens to displace them.

Cancelling debt will also help global south governments to rebuild public services and buy Covid-19 vaccines.

Debt cancellation would help atone for the climate and ecological debt owed by the global north to the global south. Commitment for Life joins Global Justice Now in calling for massive debt write-offs with immediate additional finance to compensate for loss and damage due to climate change.



Poverty Facts: Zimbabwe

- Poverty affects 76.3% of Zimbabwean children living in rural areas.

Roughly 74% of the population lives on £5.00 a day and the average wage per month is around £230.

- Half of Zimbabwe's 13.5 million people live below the food poverty line. - About 3.5 million children are chronically hungry.

- Approximately 1.3 million Zimbabweans were living with HIV as of 2016. However, the number of HIV cases has been declining since 1997 because of improved prevention, treatment and support.

- About 60% of rural Zimbabwean women face period poverty, meaning they lack access to menstrual supplies or education. Girls who experience period poverty miss an estimated 20% of their school life.

- Due to famine and the HIV/AIDS crisis, the average life expectancy for a Zimbabwean was only 61 years as of 2018. However, life expectancy has steadily risen since 2002 when it was only 44 years. In 2019, two million Zimbabweans had no access to safe drinking water due to drought.

Commitment for Life has supported Christian Aid's work in Zimbabwe for decades. Sometimes it feels like just a drop in the ocean, but for tens of thousands of Zimbabweans, your prayers, advocacy, and generosity can be the difference between life and death. Thank you for your support!

Commitment
for **Life**

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

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(Note from editor: Unfortunately the links in the article do not work, the original article is here where the links do work:

https://urc.org.uk/images/Commitment_for_Life/Moving_Stories/Moving_Stories_Zimbabwe_Nov_Dec_21.pdf)

Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area

Trinity URC Closure

Trinity URC, Harlow Closing Service will be on November 7th at 4 pm led by the Eastern Synod Moderator, Rev Lythan Nevard - Please come and support our Trinity friends as they close a very important chapter of faith and service in their lives and in Harlow. Food and refreshments will be served afterwards.

Christmas Market

An important date for your diary...

Christmas Market
Hoddesdon Methodist Church
Saturday 20th November
10.00 am – 2.00 pm
Loads of Stalls, Refreshments,
Crafts for Children
Entrance: 20p

Find us at: Middlefield Road, Hoddesdon, EN11 9ED

Pandemic Prayers

Parent God

We are living through a time when many things look the way they did before we lived through lockdowns, but many things look different. Remind us that you are our ever-present, unchanging, loving God.

The news continues to dwell on the worst aspects of life, it is easy to be pulled towards a negative viewpoint. Help us remember that we carry Your Hope in our souls; that our spirits bubble with a joy that cannot be extinguished.

Walk with us, guiding us on the days that we are the joy and light for others through the uncertainty. Comfort us during our dark and fearful days.

Call us to action when we despair that things are bad. Inspire us to think of the needs of others when self-pity is close at hand.

Catch us close to you always.

Amen

By Kirsty-Ann Mabbott, URC Church Related Community Worker, Coventry

COP26: The Road to Glasgow

(From the Joint Public Issues Team)

What is COP26? COP26 is the 26th annual meeting of the 'Conference of Parties' on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This is the international framework through which governments agree action to limit global emissions.



**UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2021**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

Where and When: COP26 is being held in SEC in Glasgow from the 31st October to 12th November 2021

Why is the Glasgow Summit so important?

Global

COP26 is an important moment for global climate policy. Scientists have warned that if climate change is not kept below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the consequences are irreversible. At COP26, for the first time each nation will be asked to set a date for achieving net-zero carbon emissions. This is a more powerful objective than previous agreements, as net zero sets

out a vision for carbon neutrality. Governments are also required to make explicit pledges about what they will achieve by 2030. Ahead of COP26, governments have been increasing their commitments. The COP is an opportunity for these to be stated and welcomed globally, and also to welcome the return of the USA to the Paris Agreement.

UK

In April 2021, the UK Government commitment to cut carbon emissions 78% from 1991 levels by 2035. It extended these targets to include emissions from international aviation and shipping. At COP26, the UK government will have two roles:

- As the UK holds the presidency of COP26, it will play a key role in shaping discussion and ambition at the meeting. It can use this role to secure global commitments and drive just and fair outcomes from the talks.
- As a member of COP, the UK needs to commit to its own ambitious targets for net zero, and outline plans to achieve them.

What needs to happen at COP26?

A successful COP26 meeting would be one where:

- The UK government is held to account on its own commitments for climate action
- The government uses the presidency to achieve progress on the international agenda for just and fair solutions

Our values: What are the churches saying?

Caring for God's Creation

A central calling of Christianity is to live in a way which enables both people and planet to flourish. As churches and as part of a wider body of faiths, we have a strong moral voice to bring.

Just and Fair commitments

We need to recognise the injustices of the climate crisis, and work towards responses that are fair for everyone. Higher emitting countries must commit to ambitious targets for emissions reductions, as well as paying their fair share to support rebuilding and resilience. Lower emitting countries already on the frontlines need to be able to shape decisions about their own future.

Local, national, global

As Christians, we recognise that our neighbours spread across the world, from local to national to global. Our calling to love our neighbour means that we have a responsibility to seek partnership, listen well and prioritise the needs of others.

Advocacy and Transformation

As a church, we can take this opportunity to reflect on our own complicity in the climate crisis, and the steps we can take towards change. At the same time, we can amplify our commitment to climate justice by calling the on the UK government to do the same.

Spotlight on: Policy Campaigns

UK Carbon reduction and net zero

In April 2021, the UK Government commitment to cut carbon emissions 78% from 1991 levels by 2035. However, there has so far been a gap between the pledges the UK government has made and the action they have taken to meet them. COP26 will be an opportunity to encourage the government to commit to concrete action to close the gaps and keep the UK on track for net zero.

Stop funding the expansion of the fossil fuel industry

The UK subsidises fossil fuels by directly financing UK oil and gas projects, charging a discounted 5% VAT rate for gas and electricity usage, and freezing fuel duty in successive budgets. Faith groups will be asking the UK government to end fossil fuel subsidies in the UK.

International climate finance

Countries on the frontline of the climate crisis often do not have sufficient funds to deal with loss and damage, resulting in an incredibly unequal and unjust impact. There has been little progress at successive meetings to get finance to address loss and damage on the agenda. Faith communities are calling for action to protect and support vulnerable people in the long term.

More information here: <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/cop26/>

A Prayer for COP26

To our God
who made and can move mountains,
who created people and can touch their hearts and minds,
who declared that the world was very good and can make it to be so again,
who has the world in his hands,
be praise and glory.

We lift before you the COP climate talks and the future of the planet.
We are sorry for the damage that has been done,
but we come before you knowing that you are a God of mercy and miracles.
We pray for the world leaders gathering in Glasgow,

that they would do what is right and fair.
May the common desire to protect the world enable good conversations,
positive actions and bring about unity.

We pray for those joining from countries on the frontline of climate change
who are experiencing the worst impacts, having contributed the least.
We pray that their voices would carry weight and power,
and that you, God, would protect their place at the negotiating table.

Lord, would you help us in the UK to host with humility, compassion,
and generosity.

You are a God for whom nothing is impossible or too late.
In the face of this climate crisis, we hold on to the hope found in you.
Hear the cries of your people, O God.

Amen.

Written by Ruth Valerio