

# Stepping Stones

April 2022

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

Minister

Revd Cecil White  
cewhaebea@gmail.com  
07483147441  
Rest day Monday

The **Methodist** Church 

 *The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church

## **From the Minister**

Death and resurrection are basic to an appreciation of human life; indeed, we Christians have been living with these rhythms as they have become the weft and warp of what being a disciple means.

Believing in death and resurrection can offer meaning to many of life's consequences. Take for example the simple fact of our existence: we live and we die, out of which some things take on a new meaning. This may not mean 'resurrection' as classically understood in Christian doctrine, nor as one tradition understands the funeral service – 'a service of witness to the resurrection' - but it can mean the beginning of a new era.

Every so often life doesn't deal us a particularly good hand, for we find that there are times of challenge and change that leave us feeling rudderless. Some of us, for example, may have had the unpleasant experience of being made redundant at which point we may have felt we were left isolated - grieving over a job that at one time gave us dignity and a sense of meaning. In that darkness it is hard to see light or anticipate hope, but sometimes we are lifted out of obscurity and distress into God's glorious brightness.

The death of our Lord reminds us of life's dark places, but his resurrection reminds us of hope. These twin elements that give our existence a meaning are aids for living. Death and resurrection can bring about deeper realisation about what life is about and how we must necessarily go through its ebb and flow. Ebb and flow ..... 'a recurrent or rhythmical pattern of coming and going or decline and regrowth'.

Decline has been a theme for some in these challenging days when sister churches must face closure, but resurrection is the theme for Christians as they journey on in faith in new ways beyond the comfortable walls of a once familiar chapel. Resurrection should be the theme of the church that comes through the tribulations of dying and death, just like the Lord.

---

In our prayers, please hold before God the Methodist congregations of North Weald and Epping as they face these days of transition. Through the pain of closing may they be lifted from darkness and distress into God's light and peace. Let us pray that individuals find new spiritual homes so that they may continue in the fellowship of the church.

## Important Dates for your Diary

A Service of Thanksgiving for the life and witness of Epping Methodist Church Sunday 31 July, 2.30pm followed by refreshments.

A Service of Thanksgiving for the life and witness of North Weald Methodist Church Sunday 23 October, 2.30pm followed by refreshments.

## Announcement

The Reverend Cecil White has been called to the North Lincolnshire Area Pastorate in the East Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church. He concludes his service in HAEBEA and these four churches on Sunday 14 August.

Cecil says, "I have been deployed in HAEBEA since the beginning of January 2018, during which time I have had the privilege to share with you all on the journey of faith. I hope I have been a faithful pastor and spiritual accompanier. However, if there have been times when I have been lacking in any way or haven't met expectation, I ask for forgiveness. God bless you all as you journey on with Christ."

## **Epping Methodist Church**

As you have all probably heard by now our Church will be closing in July. Our last service will be on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> of July at 2.30pm followed by tea and cakes in the Hall. It was a very hard decision to make but with falling numbers it seemed the only one to take. The 31<sup>st</sup> July will also be Cecil's last Sunday in HAEBEA before he leaves to take up a new role in Lincolnshire. We wish him and Sam all good wishes in their new home.

Women's Fellowship continues to thrive, we've had a couple of new members join us and everyone seems to find meeting in the Church much cosier than in the Hall! Our next meeting will be on 12<sup>th</sup> April at 2.p.m and Cecil is coming to talk to us. We usually close in May but, by popular demand, this year we are staying open until July.

The Lent group continues on Thursdays 10am:

- 31<sup>st</sup> March: Jesus praying
- 7<sup>th</sup> April: Jesus generous under pressure

All are welcome.

Happy Easter and special wishes to everyone with April Birthdays.

## Epping United Reformed Church

### Lent Group

Thursdays 10am at Epping Methodist Church

- 31<sup>st</sup> March: Jesus praying
- 7<sup>th</sup> April: Jesus generous under pressure

All are welcome.

---

A big thankyou to those who hosted and supported our Lent Lunch, approximately £150 was raised for the DEC Ukraine Appeal.

Birthdays wishes this month to Janet and Maisie.

## North Weald Methodist Church

### Lent Group

Fridays 10am

- 1st April: Jesus praying
- 8th April: Jesus generous under pressure

All are welcome.

## Ongar United Reformed Church

### Lent Group

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April, 11am: Jesus generous under pressure, All welcome.

### Reflections From Lent Bible Study

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1: 4-5)

In our Lent Bible Study group we considered the question of serving God and man in the light of Jesus' mission statement contained in Luke 4:16-29. We first spoke about whether serving felt a drudgery or delight and then went on to consider who we had a calling to serve, both in the church and in our day-to-day lives. We agreed that service could often feel a drudgery at times but

that people's reaction to our service and our feeling that we were being useful and helpful to others would often turn it into a delight.

I want to consider here though when does service begin and when does it end? From Jeremiah we learn that we are appointed by God, chosen to serve Him in certain ways before we are born. We are dedicated to God in baptism and renew our vows to serve Him during our lives when we are admitted to membership, confirmed or inducted as Elders, worship leaders or lay preachers. Our service though is not only when we are recognized by others in the Church as taking certain roles. It is a daily commitment to do the best we can to follow Jesus' example in all our relationships with others and, as such, it never ends. We may think that we have fulfilled our service to God as we have attended a service on Sunday, but service to God is every day, every hour, every minute of our lives. We may make excuses to ourselves not to take on duties in the Church but God knows what He wants us to do and will make sure that we follow His call. We can bring God to people in a smile, thanking them for the little things they do for us, listening to them attentively, letting them find solutions for themselves, rather than breaking in with advice, helping them with the little things, but always listening for what God wants us to do. At the moment, with the war in Ukraine, there are so many new and different ways people can serve God. We have expressed our willingness as a church to open up our doors so that any refugees in Ongar can come together, to speak in their own language and share their worries about those left behind. They will be strangers in a strange land, many not speaking English, having undergone long and arduous journeys to be safe. As Christians and a church, we have an opportunity to serve God by our presence but also as we pray for them, for their country and for peace. Please pray that you may be shown how you can serve others each and every day.

### Twinkles

We are continually surprised by the response we get from our carers to our charity mornings, particularly when we count up how much we have made on the day. Our Comic Relief morning on 17<sup>th</sup> March for Red Nose Day was no exception and £125 was raised. We really appreciate the effort people put into the day, especially those providing cakes and raffle prizes. The cakes are enjoyed with our coffee and tea, as well as being taken home for others in the family. We know that times can be hard for many people, particularly young families, so their generosity is amazing. Although we had given out mask templates beforehand, no child wore one but we know from conversations that many had been busy making them with or for their children. We also had one little boy who dressed up for the day and his effort (and that of his grandmother!) was also appreciated. As it was also St. Patrick's Day we had two children dressed in Irish-patterned onesies as well!

Although we now have many people attending regularly, we are still welcoming new people amongst us. Some respond to our poster in the

library, some are contacted via Facebook and others are brought along by friends who enjoy their time with us and want to involve others too. They may not come along to church on a Sunday but we are able to show God's love to them in our welcome and all we do in the group, so please pray for our group and its work. Joan

#### General Assembly 2022

I have today heard that I will be part of a group from Eastern Synod attending this year's General Assembly in July. I have never been before and did not follow it when it was live-streamed last year so this will be a new experience for me.

Joan

#### Open House

Open House is bustling with activities, with knitting needles clicking away again with some ladies making cosy hats for premature babies. They are made in different colours to identify first a premature baby in yellow, red for getting better & green for going home. These items are then given to Basildon Hospital Baby Unit.

We've had the pleasure of sharing two birthday celebrations this past month with Avril & an extra special one with Jean Easter and enjoyed the delicious cakes provided. Our mornings are spent chatting over coffee or tea exchanging family news; ailments or inevitable household problems. This Springtime seems to be pleasing everyone more than ever; with reports of butterflies, birds & bees as well as all the blossom, including the troughs of colour supplied by "Ongar in Bloom".

We also remember our friends who are no longer able to join us on a regular basis & send them messages from time to time with our love in the form of card & words.

In our small way, we 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, & mourn with those who mourn'

Romans 12:15

#### Coffee Morning

The Coffee Morning & Sale on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March raised £105.00 plus £19.00 from the Quiz sheets making a total of £124 to add to our Ukraine appeal. Thank you to Brenda for compiling the Quiz sheets once again.

The next Coffee Morning on 30<sup>th</sup> April will be for the Salvation Army.

---

We would like to wish 'Happy Birthday' to those having a birthday in April.

# National Call to Prayer for Ukraine

## Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022

*Christian Aid is asking churches and Christians from across the UK and Ireland to come together in an act of witness to pray and light candles for Ukraine, for an end to the conflict, and for all those affected by the terrible impact of war. We all share a feeling of horror and powerlessness but every prayer, every action brings hope to the people of Ukraine. Please share this prayer during your worship on Sunday (and if possible perhaps in a more public event with other churches and your wider community)*

### A prayer for Passion Sunday

God of all peoples and nations,  
Who created all things alive and breathing,  
United and whole,  
Show us the way of peace that is Your overwhelming presence.

We hold before you the peoples of Ukraine and Russia,  
Every child and every adult.

We long for the time  
When weapons of war are beaten into ploughshares.  
When nations no longer lift up sword against nation.  
We cry out to you for peace.

Protect those who only desire and deserve to live in security and safety.  
Comfort those who fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones.  
Be with those who are bereaved.

Change the hearts of those set on violence and aggression  
And fill leaders with the wisdom that leads to peace.

Kindle again in us a love of our neighbour,  
And a passion for justice to prevail  
And a renewed recognition that we all play a part in peace.

Creator of all hear our prayer and bring us peace.  
Make us whole.  
Amen.

## Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area

### Spring Fair at Roydon URC

Saturday 2nd April, 10am — 1pm

We hope that you can come and join us at Roydon URC for our Spring Fair on Saturday, 2nd April, 10am -1pm. There will be a lovely selection of stalls including cakes and savouries, tombola, plants and flowers, Fairtrade food, cards and small gifts, Usborne books and bric-a-brac.

We will also have a raffle with some lovely prizes from local businesses. So, do come along! The kitchen will be open for tea/coffee and chat!

All are welcome



### Hymns and Cake

We very pleased to announce that the very popular 'Hymns and Cake' at Hertford Methodist Church is back!

As we weren't able to hold it last year — because of the Coronavirus restrictions — we have a lot of catching up to do! So there will be lots of singing and even more cake, and we'll be raising much needed funds to support the work of Christian Aid.

We'd be delighted if you could join us on Sunday 3rd April, 3pm at Hertford Methodist Church.

We look forward to welcoming you.



## Churches Together in Epping and District

### Lent Lunches

12:30-2pm

- Epping Roman Catholic Church
- St Johns Church, Epping



## Walk of Witness

Good Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> April- beginning outside the Duke of Wellington Pub (opposite Tesco) at 10:30am and ending with refreshments at the Catholic Church. On Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April there will be a banner making session for the walk at The Box, St Johns Road between 2:30- 4:30pm. For adults and families (with supervised children) who would like to 'carry the Good news of Jesus' literally on Good Friday.

## **URC Eastern Synod**

*Eastern Synod has a long-time partnership with the Presbytery of Zimbabwe. We have good friends there involved in trying to make the Presbytery self-sufficient. They have roughly the same number of ministers as us, but much, much larger congregations. These congregations, however, can rarely afford to pay their minister's stipend, and so in recent years the Presbytery has established a Central Fund to try and support the churches to a) pay their ministers and b) support the mission of the church. They have established a number of businesses (farms: cattle, agriculture and chickens) in order to support the Fund. Inevitably these things need seed-funding to get them established, and for development and some damage-limitation when things go wrong. This is the most recent report to Synod from Revd Paul Neshangwe whose extraordinary commitment and energy has established and drives this Fund: as you will see he has identified the 3 current areas that currently need prayer and financial support. This article is intended to keep you updated on the work and concerns of our partners in Zimbabwe, and to keep them in your prayers. If your church was also interested in raising funds, you will see that they are all quite large sums: churches could work together to support a project, or have their own target to reach to contribute to a particular area.*

## Introduction

The Covid19 pandemic has given us some tough experiences. Some of the experiences involve losing some of the traditional methods of raising income for the church through the giving of tithes and offerings as people gather for worship in our church buildings. It has provided a tough practical test on how much we care for one another and the mission of God when lockdown restrictions prevent us from getting together.

The Central Fund has been a critical tool in the hands of the Presbytery of Zimbabwe in the endeavour to fight the harsh effects of the pandemic on

the livelihood of families of Ministers and Evangelists, as well as the ability of some of our congregations to stay current in paying their bills. Through our Central Fund, there has been a good way of pooling together of our resources to ensure that all our Ministers and Evangelists get paid the minimum stipend that is stipulated by the Presbytery.

### Central Fund Payments

In April and May 2020, our Presbytery carried out a survey to see how our congregations were managing financially in the wake of the Covid19 pandemic. The survey revealed that many of our congregations had lost their income because we were not able to meet for worship due to lockdown restrictions. We knew that this would worsen an already bad situation were some of our congregations had been unable to pay their minister's stipend even before the onset of the pandemic.

Presbytery took a tough decision to assist by paying stipends of Ministers and Evangelists whose congregations committed to work with Presbytery and other congregations through an agreed formula that has worked from July 2020 up to date. At this stage we have 27 Ministers, the Presbytery Secretary and 34 Evangelists who are all getting their stipend each month with the support of our Central Fund.

For the Ministers, each participating congregation pays 50% of the Stipend due to its Minister every month and for the Evangelists, each congregation pays 27% of the stipend. The Presbytery then contributes the other 50% for the Ministers and 73% for the Evangelists. The Evangelists' stipend is half of that of the Ministers and the Presbytery takes such a large percentage of the burden because our Evangelists are mainly working with new worshipping communities as we aspire to grow by planting new churches. *(The Evangelists work at preaching stations or new plants that don't have formal church status: we might think of them in the UK as pioneers. They often have large congregations and / or mission fields.)*

In terms of our pressing needs, this remains a critical one because each month the Presbytery has to raise US\$4200 in 2022 in order to pay those under the Central Fund. Our plan had been to raise money in the whole of 2020 and implement the Central Fund system at the beginning of 2021, but the pandemic took away the luxury of first building a healthy deposit before implementation. What this has meant is that we are running the Central Fund on a hand to mouth basis. We are hoping that through support from Partners as well as improving of income from our businesses we will come out of that scenario by the middle of this year.

→ 1<sup>st</sup> partner funding /prayer request: any amount contributed towards this will help us get some breathing space to build a good balance, that will see us move from the hand-to-mouth scenario sooner. This will enable our businesses to become stable and it will ensure that our Central Fund remains viable and sustainable.

### Current Business ventures

#### a) Vimridge Farm

We continue to do greenhouse-based tomato production and other related horticulture producing beetroot, cucumber, onion as well as choumoellier. We also have two fishponds for the production of tilapia. We complement all this with breeding 'roadrunner' chickens as well.



Our open-field farming is also growing at Vimridge. This is largely because of the drip irrigation equipment that we got through donations invested from the Norfolk and Waveney Area Partnership congregations in the Eastern Synod. We now have an agreement with a seed company called Seed-Co. They will develop Demonstration Plots at Vimridge so that they can have Field Days when they showcase how well plants from their seed turn out. They will provide seed and agronomy skills while we grow and sell the produce for our own profits.

An area of investment priority for now is in the expansion of our operations at Vimridge. We have just completed excavating a dam that will hold water that used to simply wash away to a nearby river or evaporate. Over the last few years there have been new settlements around Vimridge such that water was now blocked from flowing out of the farm and it was causing serious waterlogging on the farm. Now we are able to harvest all this water and put it to good use. We are intending to plant canola seed in the winter of this year on 10 hectares of our land. A cooking oil company called ZimGold has agreed to enter into a contract with us where they will supply inputs and buy all our produce upon harvesting. We will need to provide the labour and do the land preparation ourselves. The land preparation for the 10 hectares will cost us something in the region of US\$7500. This figure depends on how soon we get to do the work because it fluctuates as prices of fuel fluctuate. We intend to use overhead irrigation equipment that is movable. This means that we can lay pipes and water crops over a hectare at a time.

→ 2<sup>nd</sup> partner funding / prayer request: if there are congregations who prefer that their funds be invested in the agriculture business for ongoing profits, rather than spend on paying stipends right away this is the area most in need. Preparing 10 hectares of land = US\$7500. 1 hectare of irrigation equipment = US\$1300.

→ 3<sup>rd</sup> partner funding / prayer request: a truck to transport our inputs and produce. As you can see in one of the pictures above we sometimes use the back seat of my personal vehicle to transport produce. We need a one and a half tonne truck to transport material. We have been advised that this would cost at least US\$8000.

#### b) Glog Ranch

We have over 2500 hectares of land. We are currently leasing the bulk of the farm to a neighbouring farmer such that we are only left with 630 hectares shared between our Presbytery Business and Investment Unit and the schools. Of that remaining land we are entering into Partnership with two companies in order to have Dairy farming as well as produce soya beans and canola seed for production of cooking oil.

It is our view that we will have companies that are committed to large scale investment for work on at least 200 hectares to develop Glog with us, while we work with church Partners to develop Vimridge for medium scale farming.

## Epping Forest Foodbank

### Prayer Meeting

There will be a monthly prayer meeting on the last Friday each month. A time of reflection and prayer for the work of the foodbank. 1pm for coffee in the café followed at 1:30-2:15pm for prayer and reflection, at The Smith Room, St Mary's Church, 201 High Road, Loughton, IG10 1BB. Volunteers and supporters are invited.

## Epping Chorus

# EPPING CHORUS

**Musical Director: Simon Winters**

**St. John's Church, Epping, CM16 5DN**

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April at 8pm**

# GOOD FRIDAY

## REQUIEM by Fauré

**Organist: Roger Bluff**

**Admission Free**

**Programme: £2.50**

**Retiring collection  
in aid of**

