

# **STEPPING STONES** *October 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**

### **The Dash for Diesel**

Today, Friday, has meant that I have already led a Bible study at Ongar, attended to the signing of Methodist membership cards to be distributed on Sunday, visited a couple in North Weald, and doled out publicity to two churches from last night's meeting of Churches Together in Epping and District. All of the above reminds me that there appears to be a degree of 'normality' gaining a foothold with the passing of everyday, or at least I thought so until I encountered something I hadn't bargained for, namely: the dash for diesel and unleaded fuel. Yes, at the time of writing I am in Epping, mid-afternoon (I won't tell you which coffee shop) and am contemplating my movements over the next few days.

When I heard the news last night that it was likely that garage forecourts would struggle with supplies due to the shortage of tanker drivers, I thought I wouldn't let the matter worry me. But having witnessed bumper to bumper queues at three petrol stations and having seen two stations shut because they had run dry, the thought of not panicking soon became a counter intuitive. The reality was that I was now expressing concern, inwardly at least, as to how I might manage the next few days.

As many of you know, I commute to this locality almost daily which in the main involves effortless movements between villages and towns thanks to the ready availability of diesel and the M11 (when it behaves). Now I've got to think again.

It strikes me that I may not have enough diesel to fuel my anticipated journeys. Where shall my travels be taking me? (N.B. The journey distances below are return trips)

1. Visit an elderly relative on Saturday morning (97 miles)
2. Conduct two services in Epping on Sunday morning (65 miles)
3. Visit relatives in Norfolk on Sunday afternoon (138 miles)
4. Drive to Cambridge on Monday (15 miles)
5. Lead Women's Fellowship in Epping on Tuesday (65 miles)

By my reckoning, and thanks to the car's onboard computer, I have only enough fuel for an estimated 160 miles. The sum of the above journeys as you can well see means that I will need a top up!

I am already planning to stalk my local petrol station at an unbelievably unsocial hour later this evening, assuming that most motorists will be at home with their feet up enjoying a drink to mark the end of the week and consequently unfit or too tired to go out. The prospect of this late-night foray is precipitated by the fact that I need to drive to our local

railway station at 10.45pm to pick up my wife who will have returned from Manchester where she has been for two days attending a denominational committee.

If, however, petrol forecourts are not forthcoming tonight, I can see a few cancellations are called for. Certainly, no trips to relatives, as the remaining fuel will just about deliver me to my churches on Sunday and Women's Fellowship on Tuesday. God-willing I might be able to find some fuel and then all my travel problems dissolve as I ease my way through the hinterlands of Hertfordshire and Norfolk over the weekend whilst keeping to my 'work' commitments in Essex.

The Pandemic didn't really cause me as much inconvenience as the past 12 hours seems to have done. I stand amazed at just how adaptable I was throughout lockdowns, but this current dash for diesel is upsetting my apple cart somewhat. I am, as some already know, a creature of habit and this is all out with my control.

So, whilst I get myself wound up by such imponderables, I probably need to rein my neck in and start some slow breathing exercises recognizing that God is God, and all other matters are somewhat secondary.

**God, grant to me your Holy Spirit that I may discern your good and perfect will. Grant me peace of heart and mind so that I may be calm and content. Help me to believe that all my comings and goings are held together in your purpose. Grant me faith, even when I cannot see the way ahead. Order my life and refresh my outlook so that amid earth's chaos, I may know your perfect will through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.**

## **Ongar United Reformed Church**

### **Twinkles**

We have now been open for two weeks and each week we have welcomed 6-8 adults and a similar number of children. It has been good that we have had some familiar faces come again, although the children they bring now are different as the others are now in school after our almost three years of closure. We are slowly getting used to a different way of laying out the toys for our mornings and the work involved. I must admit after the first week I just wanted to go home and sleep, but the second week was easier as I slipped back into the routine. We have been glad to welcome Llyris back to help out, as well as Sandra and Cheryl on occasions. We pray that those new people who have joined will return on a regular basis and tell their friends so that we can increase our numbers (to the extent that we might have to restrict entry!!).

### **Joan**

During the past month I have not been in church many Sundays due to preaching commitments elsewhere. As August was ministers' holiday time, lay preachers were kept very busy and you may not have realised from the Preaching Plan where my journeys have taken me! I began the month at Hertford, had a week as a member of the congregation in Ongar, then went to Hatfield Heath, Water Lane, Bishop's Stortford, before finishing the month at North Weald and Ongar. 10.30am starts at the first three and 9.30am at North Weald take quite a bit of adjustment to my morning routine! This month I have been able

to worship in Ongar for two Sundays and then was at both Epping Churches (9.30am start, which meant I had to get my neighbour out of bed at 8.30am as he had parked across my driveway!) and today (26<sup>th</sup>) for 11.00am at Grange Park in Leyton. Again, an early start as I was not sure how long I would be held up by the queues for petrol, but luckily the worst of them were on my way home. God did listen to my prayers this morning!

As well as preaching, I was at the induction of our new Synod Moderator, Lythan, in Stowmarket on 4<sup>th</sup> September and was honored to be asked to take part in that service as one of those to lay on hands. Unfortunately, two of our four were unable to attend due to illness and a positive Covid test, but others from the 'reserve' list were able to fill their places. I was able to renew the acquaintance of a lady from Christ Church, Chelmsford, who I had only met on Zoom on various occasions during the past year! It was a very enjoyable and uplifting occasion and we should all remember Lythan in our prayers as she embarks on this new and exciting time of her life.

Add to this, various courses and meetings, including a day long course yesterday on Zoom, together with various Church duties, and the past two months have been very busy!

In October I shall be with you for worship on two Sundays, although in between I hope to find a few days, petrol crisis permitting, to travel to Wales to meet my new great niece, born on 25<sup>th</sup> September and weighing in at 8lb. 15oz. I will also be preaching at Water Lane, Bishops Stortford, Epping Methodist and URC and Hatfield Heath. All the churches are very different with their own ways of changing their services due to Covid. I have gone from two hymns only at Water Lane to six at Grange Park in a service of almost one and a half hours! All too have different Covid measures in place from preaching in a gale holding on tight to my notes so they don't blow away to virtually no measures at all as the small congregation regularly socializes during the week and feel they don't need them.

I sometimes wonder how I managed to fit so much in before the pandemic as this is my cut down version of my work!

**Joan**

### **Open House**

Since re-starting Open House our numbers are continuing to grow. It is lovely to meet up again with all our regular visitors pre Covid. It is also very encouraging that over the last couple of weeks we have welcomed new visitors who haven't been before.

We are running a Charity Table during the coffee mornings. Each month we will be supporting a different Charity. During September we were collecting for The Seafarers Mission. The Charity we will be supporting during October is St. Clare's Hospice. If you have any saleable gifts to donate they would be very welcome.

### **Quiz Night**

The return of our regular quiz night on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October 7.00 for 7.30 in the Livingstone Hall. Teams of 8 £6 per person bring your own nibbles and drinks. (Tea/Coffee provided). Normal Covid procedures apply. To book a table call Sandra on 01277 363927.

### **Coffee Morning**

Coffee Morning and sale Saturday 27th November. 10 - noon in the Livingstone Hall. Proceeds to the Leprosy Mission. Come along for a bargain or just enjoy some home-made cake & tea/coffee.

We would like to wish "Happy Birthday" to those having a birthday in October.

### **Epping United Reformed Church**

Last Sunday (26<sup>th</sup> September) we celebrated our harvest festival with a beautiful flower display, and we collected food for the Epping Forest Foodbank. Afterwards we enjoyed coffee and cake outside in the sunshine. It was also lovely to see Ingrid and Archie again and it was great to finally hear the new piano in action. The toddler group also celebrated harvest with a special service in the church, when they heard the story of the feeding of the five thousand. They also brought gifts for the foodbank.



Birthday wishes in October to Esther, Dick and George.

### **Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area**

#### **Autumn Fair**

You are warmly invited to join us at Roydon United Reformed Church for our Autumn Fair on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October, between 10am and 2pm.

Come into the church, have a look at the stalls, grab a cuppa and have a chat!

All the funds raised will go to support the mission and ministry of the church...We need your support!

Roydon United Reformed Church  
Harlow Road, Roydon, CM19 5HD

## Churches Together in Epping and District

### Epping Youth Festival

Join us for a free event for ages 11 to 18  
@ The Box, CM16 5DN  
Sign up at [www.theboxepping.org.uk/epyc](http://www.theboxepping.org.uk/epyc)  
or scan the QR code

16TH OCTOBER  
EPPING  
**YOUTH**  
FESTIVAL  
SATURDAY, 4-6PM

GAMES • MARIO CART COMPETITION  
TABLE TENNIS • FAITH SPACE • SMORES  
PANCAKES • HOT CHOCOLATE  
BASKETBALL • CRAFT

Churches Together  
in Epping and District

### Boxing Event

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October, 5pm at St Johns Church, Epping.

Watch boxing and hear how it has changed lives.

More information here: <https://www.facebook.com/Churches-Together-in-Epping-and-District-1756379178009744/>

## **Epping Community Hub**

Recently opened is the new community hub at the District Council Offices in Epping High Street which is a one-stop shop for residents to access a wide range of services for help and advice. As well as council services it also includes the following charities:

- Epping Forest Foodbank
- Epping Forest Reuse
- Voluntary Action Epping Forest
- Citizens Advice
- Changing Pathways
- CHESS Homeless
- Nacro
- Peabody Outreach support
- Phoenix Futures

There will be set times and days when each organisation will be based at the Epping Community Hub, visit the website for more information:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/community/epping-community-hub/>

## **Prayers during the Pandemic**

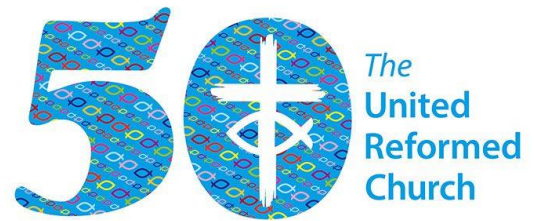
Days go by; weeks pass; the months accumulate  
and the world seems to move on.  
People gather; families reconnect; social life is rekindled  
And we breathe a sigh of relief.  
The pandemic storm has been weathered ...  
But for many the clouds do not lift;  
Their loved ones have died;  
Long Covid persists;  
jobs and careers are stunted.  
Lord be there in the midst of us all.  
Be with us in our rejoicing  
at renewal and return to what we have treasured.  
And Lord also embrace those  
who continue to mourn and grieve;  
for whom things will never be the same.  
Lord be with us all in the days in our life.  
Amen.

By Professor Graham Handscomb, member of Christchurch URC, Chelmsford

## URC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*The United Reformed Church celebrates its 50th anniversary next year.*

No one thought in 1972 that the URC would reach its silver jubilee, let alone golden. It is an unexpected anniversary, but one which we will celebrate next year while giving thanks for the life and work of the Church, past, present and future.



The 50th offers a chance to focus on all that is good in our own story and to reflect on what really matters to us, and it helps us to plan for the future. Marking such a significant milestone also offers us opportunities to connect with ecumenical friends and with the communities we serve.

It is important to mark this jubilee in ways which are accessible, useful and beneficial to as many people as possible across the length and breadth of the denomination's reach. Local churches and synods will mark this jubilee in different ways, which is truly exciting.

With this in mind, the planning group's priority is to organise events and resources which will complement these celebrations to enable everyone to join together in shared experiences and opportunities. So here are some things to watch out for:

### **Thanksgiving service, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022**

A Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration is being planned for the afternoon of Saturday, 1 October 2022 between 3pm and 5pm, in Methodist Central Hall Westminster, where the Uniting Assembly of the URC took place in October 1972. It is hoped that as many people as possible from across the denomination and beyond will attend. The service will also be live streamed.

Earlier that day, from 10am to 1pm, there will be an Open Church House event at 86 Tavistock Place and surrounding venues, with a range of activities and workshops engaging with the story of our 50 years. These include a People Library, which allows people to volunteer as 'books' so they can interact with 'readers' who have the chance to have conversations with them.

In between Open Church House and the Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration, there will be a Walk from Church House to Methodist Central Hall, following a guide which will point out places and buildings with significance to the URC and the wider Church.

### **Parliamentary service, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022**

On 21 June 2022, the 50th anniversary of the debate of the United Reformed Church bill in Parliament, we hope a service in the Palace of Westminster will take place. Further details to be released soon.

### **Resources pack**

A free pack of materials for local churches, to encourage and support local celebrations of this milestone, will be sent to all churches later this year and will also be available to download from the URC website, [www.urch.org.uk/50](http://www.urch.org.uk/50).

### **Worship competition**

A worship resources competition will enable people of all ages and abilities from across the denomination to share their creative skills in four categories: traditional hymn/song, contemporary hymn/song, rap, poem. Contributions to this competition will be shared across various media to allow as many people as possible to view, use and benefit from this content, and prizes will be given at next year's General Assembly.

An intergenerational picture book is also being published to open up the URC's story in accessible and engaging ways. It has been illustrated by Mark Beech, a professional book illustrator. This book will be free for all members and friends of the URC, and included in the pack.

### **Books**

Books and other publications for the jubilee include history texts, a book on hymnody and a joint publication with the Congregational Federation in recognition of our shared 50th anniversary. Progress has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly through the restriction of library access, but work continues on these works which are now due for publication at various points throughout 2022.

More information about all of these events and resources will be available from the URC website, [www.urch.org.uk/50](http://www.urch.org.uk/50), and the URC Bookshop, [www.urchshop.co.uk/50](http://www.urchshop.co.uk/50)

## **Faiths leaders demand climate action at COP26 in Glasgow**

[The Glasgow Multi-Faith Declaration](#), signed by representatives of religious communities across the United Kingdom, calls for people to be "advocates for justice" ahead of the COP summit. Representatives of the URC and Methodist Church signed the declaration alongside leaders of every major Christian denomination and representatives from Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh communities.

The declaration states: "We remind governments of their commitments made in Paris in 2015 to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, and of Article 17 of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights to protect the environment, the biosphere and biodiversity.

"We call upon them to take the urgent action needed to avert the loss, damage, and forced migration threatened by climate change."



It adds: “Across our doctrinal and political differences, we know that we must change our ways to ensure a quality of life which all can share, and we need to provide hope for people of all ages, everywhere, including future generations.

“To offer hope in the world we need to have confidence that those in power understand the vital role they have to play at the Glasgow COP26.”

In the Glasgow Declaration, faith groups pledge to respond to the challenge set by the climate emergency through being “advocates for justice by calling on governments, businesses and others who exercise power and influence to put into effect the Paris agreement; to make the transition to a just and green economy a priority; and to commit to science-based targets that are aligned with a healthy, resilient, zero-emissions future.”

It comes just 40 days before the beginning of COP26 when leaders are set to agree emission reducing plans to avert a rise in global temperatures of 1.5 degrees.

Read more: <https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/glasgow-multi-faith-declaration-for-cop26/>