

STEPPING STONES

*December 2021 &
January 2022*

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 lights are up, the shop fronts are decorated, the coffee shop chains and fast-food outlets are wooing us with their sugary, seasonal concoctions once more.

There is an anticipation that this is going to be our best Christmas yet. We felt robbed of the customary festivities last year, but we adapted and had a good time anyway. This year has got to be better.

It appears that our high streets and shopping centres are trying to repeat the same age-old narrative of comfort, good will, bonhomie and the like, which are commodities keenly sought at Christmas. The upset caused by the pandemic has confused the routines and rhythms that were taken for granted, as these were the things that gave shape and meaning to many lives.

As much as we expect the festive season to deliver what we need, we have learned that we cannot have everything the way we want it. Youngsters are told to dream big and to realise in themselves the capacity they have for success. The pandemic, however, has taught us that we cannot necessarily have everything the way we want it; that life does surprise us with imponderables and obstacles, with disease and sickness.

Some may argue that the only thing that can be guaranteed in this life is that Covid and its variants will be with us for a time to come. Wariness is on the lips of those who must manage community groups from gatherings at football grounds, to schools and churches. Things aren't going to be the same for some time yet. We are, though, pulling through and recovering lost ground.

Let us, then, join our high streets with the Christian voice of hope and joy, 'for unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given....and he shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...'

God bless you this Christmas!

-o-

The Minister is on leave from Sunday 26th December until Sunday 2nd January. Pastoral needs should be directed to the elders or pastoral visitors of your respective church.

Christmas Day Worship for the four congregations shall be held at Epping United Reformed Church at 10am.

Please note there will be no service in any of our four churches on Sunday 26th December. There will be services at St Andrew's Methodist Church, Harlow at 10:30am and at Leaside Church, Ware at 10:30am.



Epping Methodist Church

Christmas Crib on display at Epping Methodist Church: All day Friday 3rd and Saturday 4th December

Come along to view a variety of Christmas crib scenes and hear recordings of seasonal music as you go about your Christmas shopping. Coffee will be served on Saturday morning from 10am until 12 noon.

Epping United Reformed Church

Christmas Services

- 19th December: Christingle and Nativity service followed by mulled wine and minced pies.
- 25th December: Christmas Morning worship, 10am
- 26th December: No Service

Advent Sessions

Our Advent series this year, which will run on Tuesdays at 10.30am, starting on Tuesday 30th November. We will meet in person at Epping URC. We will have the kettle on, but if you would feel more comfortable, please bring your own flask or drink. As during services, we will wear masks when moving around and be seated with spacing. If any of you would like to join us but are

not able to attend due to distance or timing, we would be happy to send you the material we are using for you to follow, as we prepare for Christmas.

Session 1: Justice: Jesus on Earth

Session 2: Relationships: Jesus living amongst us

Session 3: Healing: Jesus and restoration

Session 4: Glory: blinded by the light

It would be helpful - but not essential - for you to let us know if you are hoping to come.

Toddler Group

The toddler group raised an excellent £110 pounds for Children In Need. This Christmas they will be having their end of term Christmas party followed by a nativity service in the sanctuary. All the families will also be receiving a 'Come and See' URC advent box of activities.

First World War Memorial

The WW1 memorial which remembers 14 church members who died in the war has, since the church was rebuilt in 1997 been hung in a store room has now been moved to a more befitting location in the sanctuary alongside the WW1 grave marker. The memorial was originally installed in 1920 following fundraising from the soldiers' widows and was unveiled by Dame Margaret Lloyd George, the wife of the then Prime Minister David Lloyd George. A memorial window was also installed at the same time which was sold in the 1990s when the church was rebuilt as it was felt at the time there was no suitable location for it in the new building, but there is a photo of it alongside the memorial.

Birthdays

Birthday wishes this month to Hanna, Margaret, Emily and Alan.

North Weald Methodist Church

Women's Institute Carol Service at North Weald Methodist Church on Thursday 9th December at 2pm followed by refreshments.

Ongar United Reformed Church

The late Douglas Walter Kelly

The funeral service for Doug was held in our Church on 11th November, followed by cremation at Parndon Wood Crematorium. During the service his son, Rob, gave a very moving and heart-felt tribute to his father. The service was led by our Minister, Cecil, and all the hymns were chosen and preceded by an introduction written by Doug. Doug had also chosen all the readings and this all came together to make the service very personal, as if Doug was amongst us singing God's praise loudly with us.

I first came to know Doug when I was ordained to the Eldership of the church as he was at that time an Elder and the leader of the property committee looking after the buildings of the church. I came to know him, Charlotte and his family well, as my daughter became friendly with Marian as they were in the same class at Davenant. He and Charlotte began a Youth Club at the church which ran for some time, giving youngsters somewhere to go and keeping them from the streets and mischief on a Friday evening. Doug was never backward in coming forward and often his views were put strongly, which was not always popular with others. I came to rely on his sound and reasoned advice, realizing the depth of his faith which led him on and which governed his life. I welcomed his advice and, often, criticism, even when he was unable to attend church regularly. He kept in touch by phone regularly, until his hearing made such conversations difficult. He was always fully aware of what was happening in our church and forthright in his judgments. Once he left Ongar it became difficult to speak to him but he liked to know what was happening and I hope that the weekly worship sheets during the pandemic kept him very much involved in worship. I shall miss him as a friend, an advisor and, yes, a critic, but join in saying: "Well done thou good and faithful servant".

Joan

Twinkles

We are now thriving once again, having welcomed many new carers and children since we re-opened. We are now back watching how the children grow so rapidly and noticing the developments in them. Some of those who were babies when they first came are now walking and interacting with others. We are gradually getting back into the way of running the group, which was hard at first as too often I forgot the tunes or words to well-known nursery rhymes and had to admit this and seek help from others!

Our charity morning for Children in Need was a big success, the cakes available being widely enjoyed and extra taken home for later in the day. Everyone enjoyed it so much that we ran out of time and were unable to have a story and sing! Our charity mornings create a different atmosphere to the normal days and it is hard to understand why, but I think it is because everyone comes together much more in a common cause. On the day we

raised £106.54 and this was added to by £56.60 from Open House. Eventually a donation of £165 was made online to Children in Need and the certificate is awaited! Our next charity morning will be for Red Nose Day on 17th March.

Joan

Thoughts from Joan

It is very popular now for people to create a 'bucket list', that is of things they wish to do before they die of some disease or have their mobility restricted. I was challenged this week to think of a bucket list for the church, perhaps better to be called a wish list. Like most people I automatically thought of increasing numbers at services, more services being required, children in the church and Junior Church, thriving organisations for all ages making the church a living, inspiring place to be, doing God's work and spreading His Word. Then I pulled myself up and began to think of the things that are stopping us from fulfilling this wish list. Some people feel that they have tried to do this in the past and that someone else can take over, others feel that they are no longer physically capable of taking part or being active in the church. It is often felt that those outside of the church are not willing to learn about God and Jesus or come into the church, but the times we have been through and are still going through show that there is a desire amongst people to seek a better way of life. Just as people try hard to fulfil their 'bucket lists', so we in the church should work harder to fulfil our 'bucket list'. We will never attract people to learn more about Jesus and our beliefs unless we make an effort before it is too late. People can never turn to God and Jesus if the church has closed because of low numbers. No-one can ever fulfil their bucket list unless they try and make an effort. God will show us the way for us to achieve what we consider the impossible.

Open House

Our coffee mornings continue to be a popular place for friends to meet and catch up with each other's news. We usually celebrate birthdays with cake and birthday wishes. During November it was time to wish Jean St. Pierre a "very happy birthday". Our charity table during November was in aid of Children in Need. We raised £56.00 and thank everyone for their continued support. During December we will be supporting Breast Cancer research and care.

Pam

Quiz Night

The quiz night in October raised £335 for Motor Neurone research. We were well supported by our regular 'quizzers'. It was a fun evening, the raffle always popular thanks to generous donations.

Coffee Morning

Our first Coffee Morning & Sale since Covid changed everything. Despite many events in town taking place at the same time we had a good turnout.

We received many favourable comments from visitors so happy to be back. The total raised was £213 for The Leprosy Mission which was very gratifying. A huge thank you to Brenda for delaying her drive to care for her grandchildren in order to set up in advance & be there on the day. Also I'd like to thank Sylvia who is new to Ongar and our Church, who rolled up her sleeves to help when she saw we were shorthanded she made a big difference. Last but not least, our dear Angie who comes to every event & weekly meetings. To help set up and clear away. She comes along quietly without any fanfare and makes such a difference. I know we all appreciate her help.

We would like to wish happy birthday to those having a birthday in December and January.

COP26 Response

Joint response from the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church on the conclusion of the Glasgow COP26 climate summit.

Significant new statements have been made at the summit in Glasgow. Most government delegations accept that the sense of urgency is greater than it was six years ago at Paris. But ultimately the summit has not delivered. All governments must agree on the necessary actions to avoid 1.5 degrees of warming. The failure of all parties at COP26 to unequivocally support this higher ambition with funding and emission reductions is an injustice towards those whose livelihoods have already been devastated by climate change.

We are deeply disappointed that the language on phasing out coal was weakened at the last moment however the summit has called for the phasing out of 'inefficient' subsidies for fossil fuels. COP26 has also initiated a process to create a fund to help communities recover from loss and damage resulting from severe climatic events. These developments are crucial and welcome, but we cannot wait for pledges to be reviewed and turned into action every five years. Action must be taken now. The pace and intensity of action must keep up with the science and with the realities experienced by an increasing number of people whose flourishing – now and in the future – depends on the actions that we all take today.

Many of our church partners in developing countries are already experiencing the dire impact of changing weather patterns on livelihoods and food security. Revd James Bhagwan, General Secretary of the Pacific Council of Churches said as he arrived as a delegate at COP26 that for many in the Pacific Islands, Psalm 137 with its reference to being "By the rivers of

Babylon..." has particular resonance. As these communities face exile they experience a sense of loss of identity, loss of sovereignty, and loss of future. At COP26 our churches have listened to and sought to amplify the voices of those in the global South who are critically affected by loss through changing climates.

Our Churches acknowledge that while we live in an age of individuality and immediacy, this is a journey not of individuals but of a community: the people of God and the people of the earth. Whilst individual actions are important, this is a journey that requires us to work together to build a safe and healthy future for all. The involvement of so many sectors of society in COP26 was an inspiration. Sadly, the response of governments is not yet adequate and we call for further actions that respond meaningfully to the magnitude of the emergency that we face.

For a detailed analysis of the issues and outcomes from COP26 click here: <https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/the-glasgow-cop26-summit-briefing-what-we-need-and-what-we-got/>

Pandemic Prayers

"The light shines. It is not overwhelmed by the night." (John 1:5 paraphrase)

Jesus, as we begin Advent,
we pray for your light to shine,
especially for folks experiencing difficult times
or missing a loved one who has died.

We think of NHS workers
and ask that they not be overwhelmed this cold and flu season.

We think of the bereaved
and ask that your light shine on the good memories,
so that grief does not overwhelm.

Help us to get through this winter together.

Amen.

By the Revd Angela Rigby, minister serving Christ Church URC Tonbridge and St Johns Hill URC Sevenoaks

EPPING CHORUS

Musical Director: Simon Winters

Friday 17th December 2021 at 7.30pm

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

Carol of Christmas

Accompanist: David Pickthall



Admission free

Programme: £2.50

Retiring Collection in aid of
Epping Forest ReUSE

