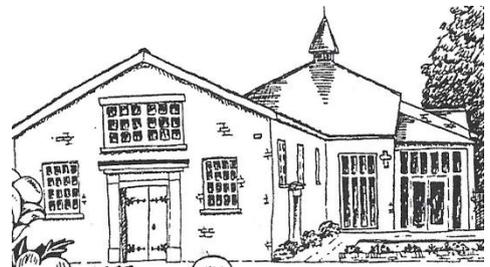


# Stepping Stones

*Newsletter for*

EPPING UNITED  
REFORMED CHURCH



ONGAR UNITED  
REFORMED CHURCH

March 2026

Minister:  
Revd Karen Knight



## **Minister's Message**

Lent is a time for reflection, and I like to think reconciliation. It reflects the time Jesus spent in the wilderness being tempted by the devil. Now a days Lent seems to be more about giving up chocolate before feasting on Easter Sunday. Whilst there is nothing wrong with giving up something pleasurable for a time Lent is about so much more. It is a golden opportunity to draw closer to God.

We all get tempted, sometimes the choice is easy, a 3rd cake will make us feel sick and even if it doesn't our conscience will tell us we're just being greedy. Sometimes the choice is harder, we know we shouldn't gossip but everyone does it. How many times when children get caught doing something daft, wrong or even dangerous is the response: "But he/she does it!" My mother's response to that was always: "If he/she jumped in front of a steam roller, would you?" (I suspect children today wouldn't know what a steam roller is, but the excuses remain the same.)

Jesus when he was being tempted by the devil didn't rise to the bait but calmly replied with words of scripture. This Lent I encourage you to spend time with the Bible so that when temptation comes, and it will, you like Jesus can respond with the Word of God.

**Humankind cannot live by bread alone, but on the Word of God. (Deuteronomy 8:3-4 and Luke 3:3-4)**

God Bless

Karen

[revdkaren@gmail.com](mailto:revdkaren@gmail.com)

# Epping URC News

Website: [eppingurc.org](http://eppingurc.org)

Email: [urcepping@gmail.com](mailto:urcepping@gmail.com)

Facebook: @EppingURC

## March Preaching Plan, all 11am

1<sup>st</sup> Rev Karen Knight *Holy Communion*

8<sup>th</sup> Rev Stuart Veitch

15<sup>th</sup> Local Arrangement

22<sup>nd</sup> Elizabeth Stockdale

29<sup>th</sup> Rev Karen Knight

5<sup>th</sup> April Elizabeth Stockdale *Easter Sunday*

## Dates for your Diary

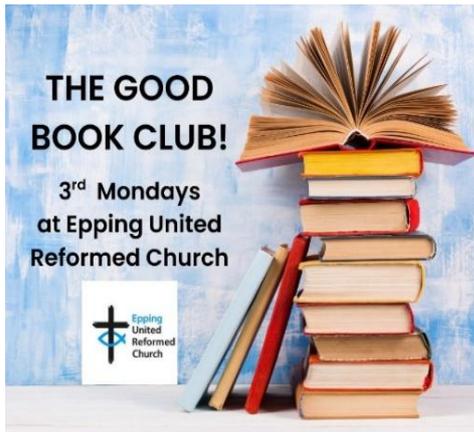
“**Big Brew**” Fairtrade coffee morning Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March, 10:30am to Midday in aid of Transform Trade (formerly traidcraft). Please use fairtrade ingredients where possible in any bakes. Raffle prizes welcome- please bring fairtrade gifts. Oxfam, M&S and Coop have many fairtrade items including tea, coffee, chocolate, sugar, bananas.

Transform Trade is the successor to Traidcraft and partners with inspirational producer collectives and social enterprises around the world to find new ways to tackle global challenges of poverty, climate change and inequality. It supports producers around the world in their fight for a fairer trade system with their work at present focusing on the food we eat, the clothes we wear and the devices in our pocket. Find out more about what Transform Trade do here: <https://www.transform-trade.org/> .

Fairtrade products can now be purchased from Transform Trade online including tea bags, greeting cards, toilet rolls, tissues and kitchen rolls. This year’s big brew is celebrating 40 years of transform trade.



## Book Club starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> March, 7pm.



March 16 7pm  
*The gospel, according to John*  
April 20 10am  
*Frankenstein Mary Shelley*  
May 18 7pm  
June 15 10am  
July 20 7pm

## Churches Together in Epping & District

**Lent Lunches:** On Saturdays throughout Lent, Churches in Epping will offer a simple lunch for a voluntary donation between 12:30pm and 2pm. All proceeds will go to a range of charities. No booking required, all are welcome.

Dates and venues:

- 21st February: Epping Catholic Church
- 28<sup>th</sup> February: No Lunch
- 7th March: St John's Church
- 14th March: Restore Community Church at The Box
- 21st March: Epping Green Chapel
- 28th March: United Reformed Church



Churches Together  
in Epping and District

At our Lent Lunch on the 28<sup>th</sup> March any volunteers to make soup or help serve on the day are most welcome- please speak to the elders.

The **Walk of Witness** will be taking place on Good Friday walking through the High Street.

## New Mugs

We all very much enjoying drinking out of our lovely new Epping URC branded mugs! They are a gift to the church from Dick, Stephen and family in memory of Edna.



## **Epping Forest Foodbank**

We have received a thank you certificate from the Foodbank for the 102.55kg of food and other goods the church donated during 2025. As you may recall from previous years, the Foodbank likes to compare the amount to the weight of an animal and this time we donated the equivalent weight of a reindeer!



The Foodbank also says:

2025 was the busiest year for us ever. We supported over 7000 individuals, half of these were children under the age of 17, who without our work would have gone hungry as more and more households reach crisis point and were not able to afford the basics. This level shows no sign of slowing as the cost of living continues to squeeze household budgets, we expect to support similar numbers of people in 2026. Without the support of organisations such as yours, it would not be possible for us to carry out our vital work.

A reminder, we have a donation point at Epping URC located in the hallway. The current most needed items are: Tinned fruit & veg, tinned meat, tinned soup, fruit juice, UHT milk, tea, coffee, laundry tablets, shampoo, deodorant and toilet rolls.

## **Toddler Group**

This month the Toddler group will be celebrating Mother's Day and Easter and will also be raising money for Comic Relief.

## **Birthdays**

A very happy birthday this month to Stephen, Jo, Brian and Baden!

# Ongar URC News

**Website:** <https://www.ongarurc.org.uk/>

**Email:** [mail@ongarurc.org.uk](mailto:mail@ongarurc.org.uk)

## **March Preaching Plan, all 11am**

1<sup>st</sup> Graham Watson *Holy Communion*

8<sup>th</sup> Mike Dyer

15<sup>th</sup> Efua Koi-Larbi

22<sup>nd</sup> Penny Bloom

29<sup>th</sup> Mike Shelbourne

5<sup>th</sup> April Joan Smith *Easter Sunday – Holy Communion*

As stated by Karen at the Church Meeting, dates for the next preaching plan for June to August have to be in by 4<sup>th</sup> April. This is a very difficult time to arrange preachers due to the holiday period. If you know of anyone who might be interested in preaching at this church during that period or any time after that, please let me or Karen know. When the plan is arranged, I try to make sure that there are not times when no preacher is allocated, often standing in myself but this may not be possible for me too during the summer months.

**Joan**

## **Dates for your diary**

- 7<sup>th</sup> March Pause For Prayer 10-12 Noon
- 28<sup>th</sup> March Coffee morning and Sale
- 3<sup>rd</sup> April Walk of Witness starting at St James' 10.00am

## **Twinkles**

I have been running this on my own since Christmas and, although various people have offered to help out, no-one has committed to do so on a regular basis or to go on a rota. Those who attend have been very helpful in sorting the toys out onto the chairs, but it does mean that I am too busy to be able to talk to people as they leave and help open the door for buggies etc. I also find difficulty in welcoming people and making sure that the door is attended to let people in and keep it secure once they are in. It is also good to have more than one person for safeguarding and health and safety. It is important, therefore, that I find people who are able to commit

themselves to helping out regularly. If you know of anyone who might be willing to help on a regular basis, I am quite willing to do the appropriate DBS check for them and basic safeguarding can be done online.

**Joan**

### **Pause for prayer**

A reminder that this is the first Saturday of each month from 10-12. People are free to come and go at any time. As the weather improves, we often get visitors from outside Ongar who are attracted in by the sign in the street and I enjoy welcoming them and answering their questions about the church. Any extra regular help, even if only during the summer months would be most helpful as we would be able to offer refreshments and/or take them to view the Taylor Gallery or the grave, otherwise we are limited in what we are able to do due to ensuring the security of the building.

**Joan**

We would like to wish “Happy Birthday” to those having birthday in March.

## **Herts and Essex Border Mission Partnership**

**Website:** [hebmp.org.uk](http://hebmp.org.uk)

**Email:** [hertssexbordermp@gmail.com](mailto:hertssexbordermp@gmail.com)

### **Solar Panels at Roydon URC**

Roydon URC has recently installed solar panels.

There are many groups that use Roydon URC every week: Brownies, Guides, Yoga, Pilates, Keep Fit, Mother and Toddler, seasonal Fayres, coffee mornings, private hires, council meetings quite apart from the regular use of the Church members themselves.

The ever-increasing cost of electricity threatens the continuation of such groups without substantial price rises. So, turning their brains to the problem URC Church Elders realised they have a large south facing roof-ideal for solar panels. Coupled with storage batteries the electricity bills will be substantially reduced. These will also contribute significantly to reducing the church’s carbon footprint and help towards achieving an eco-church award. The church received funding from the Eastern Synod and a variety of local organisations.

After nearly two years of planning the system was installed in 3 days and is already contributing to the electricity supply even in February's limited daylight. An added bonus is that the solar panels are the same colour as the roof tiles so the resultant installation is totally inobtrusive.



## World Day of Prayer 2026

### **“I will give you rest”**

Our sisters in Nigeria invite us to join them for the World Day of Prayer on Friday 6 March 2026. The service they have prepared reflects on the theme, "I will give you rest."

The World Day of Prayer is an international, women-led, ecumenical movement that shares the hopes, concerns, and prayers of women from around the globe. Each year, women from a different country craft a service, sharing their unique spiritual journey and culture. For 2026, the women of Nigeria have created a service that speaks to our need for peace and solace, drawing on their faith and experiences in a world filled with struggles and anxieties.

The preparation for this day is extensive. The writing country and theme are chosen years in advance, and the service then travels to the international committee in New York for translation and dissemination to national committees in over 120 participating countries. From there it is adapted and shared locally, culminating in gatherings at hundreds of churches every March. This day is a powerful demonstration of global solidarity. It begins in Samoa and moves across the world in a continuous wave of prayer, finishing 38 hours later in American Samoa. It truly is a worldwide day of prayer!

This year's artwork was created by Gift Amarachi Ottah and is titled "*Rest for the weary*" and depicts the daily reality of rural Nigerian women whose lives are marked by endless labour from sunrise to sunset. These women traverse treacherous paths to their farms, often carrying both their harvest and their children – a toddler strapped to their back, a heavy load balanced on their head while guiding other children along unmaintained roads through thick bush. The artwork also shows three women sitting together, their different traditional attire representing Nigeria's diverse cultures. Though they come from different ethnic groups, their shared experiences unite them. To meet their basic survival needs, these women carry burdens and traumas that are physical, emotional and spiritual. Yet there is hope for the many burdens these people are carrying. These burdens become bearable when we respond to Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest'. When we bring our weariness to Christ and support one another in community, we find rest and strength to continue our journey.



Our nearest service is at Hoddesdon Methodist Church 55 Middlefield Rd, Hoddesdon, Herts, EN11 9ED on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March at 11am.

For further information visit the World Day of Prayer Website here:

<http://wwdp.org.uk/>

## **Events at Mulberry House, Ongar**

**Run by the Nationwide Christian Trust based at Mulberry House, Ongar:**

- Men's Breakfast with Rev Sarah Guinness (chaplain of Brentford FC) on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March, 9:30am – held in our barn at Tawney Common near Epping.
- Ladies Day with Jo Moir on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 9:45am
- Easter Unwrapped evening with Abby Guinness on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 8pm
- An evening on lament and mental illness with Rachael Newman on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 8pm
- Quiz and Comedy evening with Tom Elliot on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 8pm

More details of all events and booking here:

<https://nationwidechristiantrust.com/events-page>

The trust have also sent complimentary copies of their daily devotion book Spring Living Light based on the Names of God, which are always a very interesting read, available at Epping URC.

## **Eco Tips**

### **Earth Day**

The Earth Hour 2026 takes place on Saturday 28th March, when at 8.30pm in their local time millions of people worldwide will turn off their non-essential lights for one hour. Organised by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the 20th anniversary of this global initiative will aim to raise awareness of the earth's climate crisis, and to encourage environmental action through sustainable, actionable lifestyle changes. The first Earth Hour was held in Sydney, Australia, on 31st March 2007, and has since become a global movement. The 2025/26 theme is 'Giving an Hour for Earth' is encouraging people to adapt sustainable habits in their daily lives. And while our lights are off for an hour, Earth Hour will encourage us to spend the time in nature, or stargazing, or engaging in environmental, educational, or sustainable activities. Just 60 minutes? Yes, just one hour. It may not seem like much, but the magic happens when you, and those like you in Asia and Africa, North and South America, Oceania and Europe - supporters in over 190 countries and territories - all Give an hour for our one home, creating the Biggest Hour for Earth. More info at: [www.earthhour.org](http://www.earthhour.org)



## **Carbon fast for Lent**

You can still sign up for Climate Stewards Carbon Fast for Lent- receive a weekly email containing key facts, suggestions for how you could reduce your carbon footprint and a prayer to lead you through this Lenten season. Each week features a different theme designed to help us take climate action in manageable ways that bear witness to a God who has promised to restore all his creation. Find out more and sign up at [climatestewards.org/resources/carbon-fast/](https://climatestewards.org/resources/carbon-fast/). You can also see more in the notice board in the hallway at Epping URC.

