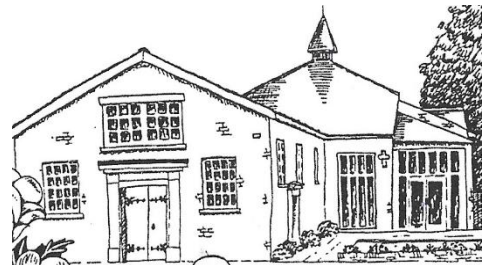


# Stepping Stones

*Newsletter for*

EPPING UNITED  
REFORMED CHURCH



ONGAR UNITED  
REFORMED CHURCH

May 2026

Minister:  
Revd Karen Knight



## Minister's Message

Although Easter Day seems a long time ago, (how long did the chocolate last?) we are still in Eastertide until May 24th when we celebrate Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples and Peter's first sermon to the masses. It is also celebrated as the birthday of the Christian Church.

The disciples had been spending the intervening time in prayer awaiting the fulfilment of the promise Jesus had made not to leave them alone but to send a helper. (John 14:16) They didn't really know what form the helper would take. Quite often when we reach out to God for help, we have in mind what that help should be like but we must be open to accepting that God may have something different in mind. I'm sure the disciples all had an idea of how Jesus' promise would be fulfilled. I'm not sure they were expecting a violent wind and tongues of fire inside the house. I must admit if I'd been there I think I would have hidden behind the sofa!

Just as the Holy Spirit descended on each disciple so we too can experience the Spirit's power in our lives. People ask me how can I manage to minister to 4 churches, be transitional minister for the mission partnership and be part of the ecumenical partnership. The simple answer is I can't but God can and I pray constantly that through the power of God's Holy Spirit I will be able to fulfil God's calling to these roles.

That is what the Holy Spirit is, it is God's power source, so if you are faced with the seemingly impossible or life at the moment is an uphill struggle then pray and take one step at a time. God will not let you down but he can lift you up.

God Bless

Karen

# Epping URC

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

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

**Facebook:** @eppingurc

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

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Rev Tim Swindell *Holy Communion*

**10<sup>th</sup>** Local Arrangement

**17<sup>th</sup>** Local Arrangement

**24<sup>th</sup>** Rev Karen Knight

**31<sup>st</sup>** Rev Gill Hulme

**7<sup>th</sup> June** Rev Tim Swindell *Holy Communion*

## **Dates for Your Diary**

- **Christian Aid Week:** We will be holding a coffee morning on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May, 10:30am – Midday in aid of Christian Aid. Our service on either the 10<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> May (tbc) will also be a Christian Aid week service. There will also be a devotional booklet for everyone containing a collection of reflections, prayers and thoughts to accompany you through Christian Aid Week.
- **Book Club:** Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 7pm: we will be looking at one of the shortest (only two pages) and perhaps overlooked books of the Bible; the Book of Haggai.

## **Birthdays**

Happy birthday to Daphne and Jeremy who celebrate birthdays this month!

## **Christians Against Poverty**

A Christians against poverty (CAP) life skills course is currently being run in our church by members of Restore Church on Monday Mornings. CAP life skills will give skills to improve important parts of your life including the pressures of low incomes and meet new friends in a relaxing and welcoming environment. Please pass on details onto anyone who may benefit. Book your free place by contacting Jayne Gould on [jaynegould@caplifeskills.org](mailto:jaynegould@caplifeskills.org) or call 07867622015.

## **Printer Cartridge Recycling**

There is a new box in the porch to recycle used printer inkjet cartridges. Used cartridges can be very damaging to the environment and as well as recycling or reusing the cartridges it also raises up to £2 per cartridge for St Clare's Hospice. Please note laser and toner cartridges are not accepted (but can be recycled elsewhere).

**Recycle Your Ink  
Cartridges to Help Us  
Raise Funds!**



## **Ongar URC**

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

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

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

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Joan Smith *Holy Communion*

**10<sup>th</sup>** Elizabeth Stockdale

**17<sup>th</sup>** Rev Karen Knight

**24<sup>th</sup>** Joan Smith

**31<sup>st</sup>** Arthur Revels

**7<sup>th</sup> June** Joan Smith *Holy Communion*

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

### **Mission Partnership Vision Day**

Following on from our meeting in February and after several discussions with churches and individuals I realise that the Mission Partnership was put together with a sense of urgency following the sudden dissolution of HAEBEA which has led to some confusion. Therefore, I believe that we should start from the beginning with a blank sheet of paper and take the opportunity to look forward with renewed hope and faith whilst discerning God's Vision for our churches.

After talking to the Moderator, we have decided to hold a Vision Day when the seven churches (Epping URC, Ongar URC, Roydon URC, Hatfield Heath URC, Leaside LEP, Stansted Free Church and Church Langley LEP) will be able to meet with the Moderator and the Synod Mission Team to talk and pray together. Nothing will be off the table; this is your Mission Partnership.

Date: Saturday 26th September

Time: 10am - 2.30pm

Venue: Epping URC

Lunch will be provided.

Although September seems a long way off it will soon come round. It is always difficult to find a date which suits everyone but I do pray you will give this priority on your calendar. The meeting is open to everyone in the congregations and I hope every church will be represented.

Between now and then I ask that you join me in praying for the future of the Mission Partnership and that God will show us the way forward, remembering that what may seem impossible for us is always achievable through his Grace and being open to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yours In Christ

Karen

### **Mission Enabler at Leaside Church, Ware**

We are seeking a person who is experienced in mission and outreach to work with us within an urban / suburban setting in the town of Ware in Hertfordshire. The role will be based at Leaside Church which is a URC/ Methodist Local Ecumenical Partnership.

- *Can you come alongside our town centre church to develop practical mission opportunities in partnership with the congregation?*
- *Do you have the skills and experience to build stronger links between church and community centre users helping meet users' needs?*
- *Are you confident working alone and building the team you need with local volunteers?*

Work will be split between engagement on the church premises and wider outreach within the town and local area. Office and administrative work can be carried out from home. Willingness to travel will be expected within the local area (e.g. to churches in neighbouring towns: Harlow, Hertford,

Bishop's Stortford) and will enable engagement with those in similar roles working across the Synod and Methodist District for training and fellowship.

An application pack and more information can be accessed via the Synod website: [www.urceastern.org.uk](http://www.urceastern.org.uk) or by emailing Elizabeth Stockdale on: [elizabeth.stockdale@perfectgroundsolutions.co.uk](mailto:elizabeth.stockdale@perfectgroundsolutions.co.uk)

Closing date for applications is **4pm on May 28<sup>th</sup>**

Please pass onto anyone who you think may be interested.

## Christian Aid Week

**Where hardship means hunger... urban farmers can grow hope.**

In the crowded and noisy settlements of Nairobi, most parents wake every single day knowing that they must go and earn money, otherwise their children won't eat that evening.



With no formal work opportunities, heartbreakingly low pay, and no social support, it's a precarious and frightening daily struggle that no family should have to face.

The aching hunger is bad enough. The relentless stress is overwhelming. **'When I wake up, I have a lot of worries. Sometimes I don't have food,'** says Fridah Moraa, a recently widowed grandmother determined to support her family on what little she earns.

**'Now I'm responsible for everything.'** With school costs, rent and water to cover, providing food for every meal is a problem that never goes away.

But Fridah's faith in God, and in her own ability to provide, is unwavering. With tools, seeds and specialist training from Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope, Fridah's now making the most of a small space in the city to grow a steady supply of fresh vegetables that she can cook for her family or sell on her market stall.



Reflecting on her new role in life, Fridah says: **'I never thought that a woman could also be a provider.'**

With her inner strength, unstoppable resolve, and a little help from Beacon of Hope, Fridah's overcoming poverty to feed the youngest members of her family and protect them from the threat of malnutrition.

Fridah rightly takes pride in all she's achieving: **'When I harvest what I've planted, it makes me happy. Urban farming has changed my life.'**

Christian Aid and its supporters are joining together once again during Christian Aid Week (10-16 May) to fundraise in all kinds of ways – from coffee mornings and craft stalls to hiking and biking for the 70k in May challenge.

With **seven days to make a difference**, every gift, act and prayer counts. **What will you do to support someone like Fridah to grow food, protect their children from hunger, and nurture hope?**



·**£5** could buy the seeds that kickstart a family's nutritious vegetable garden.

·**£10** could pay for the pair of chickens that produce fertiliser for an urban farmer.

·**£15** could purchase the hand tools that mean an urban farmer can tend their crops.

·**£30** could buy the trio of cone garden planters that host hundreds of plants in a tiny city space.

**Find out more about the campaign at [caweek.org](http://caweek.org)**

### **From the URC Website:**

**As Christian Aid Week approaches (10-16 May), its work has never been more vital, says the Revd Dr Kevin Snyman, the URC's Head of World Justice and Inter Faith.**

Each year, Christian Aid runs a flagship week, with this year's theme captured in the strapline "Your faith. Make it count."

Fundraising initiatives are a major part of Christian Aid Week's activities. Many participate in nationally organised events, including **70k in May** – a challenge to walk, run, cycle or swim 70km over the month to "help

families build food security in the face of urban poverty”. Locally, coffee mornings are a staple of the week. At Epping URC, the cake bakers will be out in force for the end-of-week Christian Aid fair, following on from the church’s Christian Aid service the previous Sunday. Jeremy Flack says the service and fundraiser are an important opportunity to focus on the charity when there are so many other organisations and special weeks to support throughout the year.

Awareness-raising is also an important feature in the planning for Christian Aid Week in Groby in Leicestershire. Groby URC joins with the local parish church for their annual Christian Aid service – this year it will take an intergenerational form. Together, the Churches Together in Groby Team (pictured below) will be out litter picking around the village every day to promote the week. “This isn’t a money raiser”, says the Revd Paul Ellis, “but it does help raise Christian Aid’s profile.”

Paul is glad, too, that alongside the library, local Co-op branches will be among the drop-off points for individuals to leave Christian Aid envelopes received through their doors. In small but visible ways, the week is becoming a community event, allowing a growing number of people to engage with the worldwide partnerships and projects the charity supports. In the year 2024-25, Christian Aid Week raised £5.2 million towards its annual income, with 50% of its grants to partner organisations that year going to Asia and the Middle East – a 52% increase on the previous year. Dr Snyman adds that the United Reformed Church has a long tradition of demonstrating incredible generosity, not least during Christian Aid Week, and believes “this year would be every bit as good”.

## **Drown out division with A Million Acts of Hope**

**News reports and social media feeds can often make it feel like the UK is more divided than ever.**

The voices of those who spread hate and seek to separate communities can be loud, but the voices of hope and kindness are louder.

Across Wales, Scotland and England, United Reformed Church (URC) congregations, community groups, and projects show up for people in their neighbourhoods every day. As part of the national “A Million Acts of Hope”

week of action, taking place 13-20 May, the URC wants to celebrate these acts of care, kindness and connection.

During this week of action, congregations, community groups and projects are invited to send in photos or videos capturing some of the many acts of hope that they are involved with in their neighbourhoods. These could highlight support for parents, refugees and asylum seekers, young people, older people, warm spaces or any other community activity that brings people together and gives people hope. These examples will help to show that there is more that connects us than divides us and will be used as part of a national campaign alongside a wide range of faith groups and other organisations which will be taking part.

Roo Stewart, Head of Public Issues for the URC, said: “Jesus encouraged us to let our light shine before others and not hide it under a basket. We can do that with humility, but often we don’t manage to do it at all because we’re tired from all the good work we’ve been doing! A Million Acts of Hope is a superb opportunity to fill our media with the superb activities run by churches and other organisations, to counter the hateful rhetoric which often seems to dominate public discourse.”

Taking part doesn’t require major planning. With the permission of those featured, simply take a nice, clear photo or a short video (less than 10 seconds is fine), and send it to [public.issues@urc.org.uk](mailto:public.issues@urc.org.uk). Please include the name of your church, group or project, location, and what is being highlighted. Optional: could some people in your photo be holding letters that spell ‘HOPE’ or could the word ‘HOPE’ feature somewhere else in your photo or video?

The Revd Jenny Mills, Deputy General Secretary (Faith in Action), added: “We know there are so many amazing things going on in URCs around England, Scotland and Wales. Churches reaching out into local communities, sharing the good news of Jesus with those who live and work near them, witnessing to the love of God through foodbanks and warm spaces, through toddler groups and cafes. So many people being beacons of hope. How great it is to be able to share this widely, counter the negativity and celebrate hope!”

For more information, include free downloadable resources, visit the A Million Acts of Hope digital community hub at [millionactsofhope.org/community-hub](https://millionactsofhope.org/community-hub).

## **Mays Eco Tip from Eco Church**



**Support pollinators.** Nothing says Spring like the buzz of a bee! But these precious pollinators are declining due to habitat loss, climate change and agricultural intensification. Wednesday 20 May is World Bee Day, so look around to see how you can improve habitats for bees and other pollinators. Read more about bees, butterflies and habitats that support them in our Target 25 resources at [arocha.org.uk/what-we-do/target-25](https://arocha.org.uk/what-we-do/target-25).

Sow a pollinator friendly seed mix, make or buy a bee hotel, let some wild flowers grow in your garden, and don't use pesticides. Pray that our pollinator populations will increase. For more about World Bee Day visit: [awarenessdays.com/awareness-days-calendar/world-bee-day/](https://awarenessdays.com/awareness-days-calendar/world-bee-day/)

