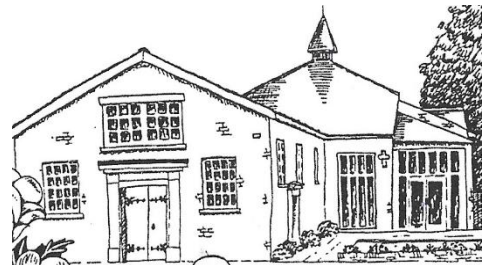


# Stepping Stones

*Newsletter for*

EPPING UNITED  
REFORMED CHURCH



ONGAR UNITED  
REFORMED CHURCH

July & August 2026

Minister:  
Revd Karen Knight



# **Epping URC News**

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

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

**Facebook:** @eppingurc

## **Preaching Plan – all 11am**

### July

5<sup>th</sup> Rev Stuart Veitch *Holy Communion*

12<sup>th</sup> Joan Smith

19<sup>th</sup> Rev Marcia Tull

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

### August

2<sup>nd</sup> Graham Watson *Holy Communion*

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

16<sup>th</sup> Rev Tim Swindell

23<sup>rd</sup> Rev Karen Knight

30<sup>th</sup> Local Arrangement

## **Birthdays**

Happy birthday to Sue, Lindsey, Claire, Peter and Tim who all celebrate birthdays this July and August.

## **News from our sister church in Mbare, Harare, Zimbabwe**

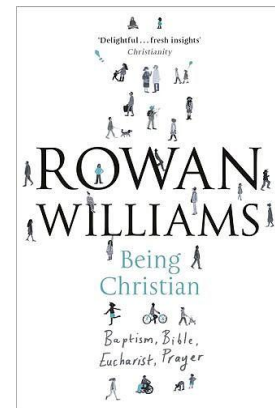
Dear Epping Family

Grace and peace to you all, greetings from Mbare family. It has been so long without passing greetings to you. As Mbare family, we cherish the relationship we have. It is through Christ that people from different continents can become brothers and sisters. Mbare congregation is experiencing God's blessing again and again. We are unitedly working together as a congregation in thick and thin. God is blessing us with new members. We are also seeing young people, especially the youth taking up leadership roles in the church. The biggest boom is in Sunday school and youth. The women's fellowship is slowly picking up. Our school is stable though we lost two teachers who left for green pastures. We are thankful to God because they were immediately replaced by two other teachers who joined the school.

We love you all, Mbare congregation.

## **Book Club**

The next book club will be on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July at 7pm. We were unable to meet last month, so we will be looking at the book we had planned for last month which was the book 'Being Christian' by Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury in which he looks at the core fundamentals of living out the Christian life. It is available to buy here: <https://www.eden.co.uk/christian-books/understanding-the-faith/being-christian/>, or speak to the elders to borrow a copy.



## **Toddler Group**

Toddler Group will finish for the summer holidays on the 15<sup>th</sup> July where instead of our usual healthy eating snack time we shall all be indulging in cake, jelly and ice cream! This will be followed by a celebration in the sanctuary with a Bible story and praise; we will also be saying goodbye to our four-year-olds who will be starting school in September. We are thankful to God for the happy times we have enjoyed this year at toddler group.



## **Prayer Box**

We have a new box for prayer requests which will be located in the hallway and cards for you to write your prayer. If you would like they can be said during the prayers in the service or just by Karen and the elders.

## **Building Works**

The redecoration is now underway which includes a redecoration of the interior of the building, replacing all lights with LEDs, new hand dryers, new guttering and a new baby changing unit. The works are expected to be in complete in approximately a months time. It is possible that for a couple of weeks we may have to have services in the hall, whilst the sanctuary is being painted and the lights replaced.

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## **Ongar URC News**

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

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

## **Twinkles**

We are now approaching the end of the school year, which is always a sad time as we say goodbye to some children we have known for 3 or 4 years as they go on to pre-school or school. Our final day for this term will be Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> July, when we will have our Teddy Bears picnic. This is always popular with the children as they bring their teddies or other soft toys along and thankfully we have never lost one yet! We have

sandwiches, sausages and cakes, as well as our usual snack, and we all sing the song 'The Teddy Bears' Picnic'.

These last few weeks have been challenging for us all due to the weather but we have usually managed to have 7 or 8 children most days. When the red heat warning was in place I used our Facebook page to let everyone know I would open up but with only a few toys out, not really expecting anyone to brave the heat. As it was though, we had two new mums join us with their children, having come to us from Chigwell. One of them used to live in the road opposite the church but had moved last year and had been unable to find a similar group where she now lives so had brought her friend along with her.

Twinkles has always been a very friendly group welcoming all newcomers. We often have people coming back with their second child as a baby because of their memories of coming to the group previously. I had thought of giving up running the group due to lack of help but have been very glad to have Susan helping me for the last couple of months. We will open again once the schools go back on 17<sup>th</sup> September and will have our usual Harvest and Christmas services in the church.

**Joan**

### **Open House**

Open house continues to be a popular meeting place for many people to gather together and share their news.

We continue to celebrate birthdays with cake and the "Happy birthday" song. Cheryl is greatly missed from our group at the moment as she has injuries to her shoulders after a fall. Thankfully she is now on the mend.

We thank Janet for helping us during the mornings. During school holidays she brings her granddaughter and she enjoys the mornings too.

We still went ahead with coffee morning on the week of the heatwave, not really expecting anyone to come but Vyjay and Sonia both made it as they live very close to the Church.

**Pam**

### **Future Services for July and August at 11.00**

#### July

5 <sup>th</sup>	Rev Tim Swindell Sacrament of Holy Communion
12 <sup>th</sup>	Graham Watson
19 <sup>th</sup>	Mike Shelbourne, coffee in hall after service
26 <sup>th</sup>	Penny Bloom, coffee in hall after service

#### August

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Joan Smith Sacrament of Holy Communion
9 <sup>th</sup>	Fred Arthur
16 <sup>th</sup>	Rev Karen Knight

23<sup>rd</sup>            Efua Koi-Larbi  
30<sup>th</sup>            Rezive Mhirbidi

### **Future Diary Dates**

11<sup>th</sup> July      5.00pm      Saturday Social Group  
22<sup>nd</sup> July      7.00pm      Elders' Meeting  
25<sup>th</sup> July      10.30–12.00 Coffee Morning and Sale  
1<sup>st</sup> August     10.00-12.00 Pause for Prayer

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## **Herts & Essex Border Mission & Ecumenical Partnerships**

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

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

### **Dates for your diary**

- Rev Gill Hulme's leaving service – Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July, 4pm at Bishops Stortford Methodist Church
  - Strawberry Tea at Leaside Church, Ware, Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2-5pm
  - Mission Partnership vision day, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September at Epping URC 10am – 2:30pm
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## **Daily Devotions**

There is no minister's letter this month as Karen was away on holiday, so instead here is a reflection from the United Reformed Church's Daily Devotions. Each morning the URC sends out a reading, reflection and prayer which helps us to focus on our journeys of Christian discipleship. The reflections are written by over 100 people with differing perspectives and from different places and a variety of subjects, for example over recent weeks themes have included hymns from rejoice and sing, the relationship between the church and state, the theology of water and the current theme of vocations where the following reflection is from. The Devotions are available by email, URC social media and at <https://devotions.urc.org.uk>. A Sunday service is also produced and sent out by email and social media.

### **Psalm 121**

I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

**daily**   
**devotions**  
from the United Reformed Church

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.  
He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.  
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and for evermore.

### **Reflection**

“I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where will my help come?” Psalm 121 has taken on new meaning for me since leaving Eastbourne, a place shaped by hills, cliffs, and long horizons. Those landscapes are woven into my sense of home, and whenever I hear this Psalm, they rise in my mind again, providing a sense of familiarity and comfort amid life changes. Lifting eyes to the hills, the Psalmist had not yet reached the destination, but strongly trusted in God’s divine presence to sustain through the journey, no matter the challenges or circumstances lying ahead. Similarly, having started my first year of ministerial training, I find myself looking at the journey ahead.

Training often encompasses moments of uncertainty and new ways of navigating through the different responsibilities to carry, the times of stillness and the joys of the unexpected and unknown. In those moments, the Psalm’s assurance speaks deeply: “He will not let your foot be moved.” God’s keeping is not fragile or sporadic; it is firm, protective, and unwavering. We are reminded that our foundation is not our own competence or confidence but God’s faithfulness and grace, on which we are able to balance firmly, while environments around us are constantly changing. When everything around us feels in motion, God remains the ground on which we stand.

This Psalm also invites us to trust in God’s constant presence: “The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in.” There is great comfort in knowing that we are never walking this journey alone. Whether we are stepping into something new, finding our way through uncertainty, or simply learning to grow, God is both companion and guardian.

As I continue in this first year of training, Psalm 121 anchors me. Whatever road you are on, trust in the solid foundation and the promise of God’s watchfulness in your journey of life, having the courage to take the next steps.

### **Prayer**

Faithful God,  
as we lift our eyes to the hills,  
steady our steps and strengthen our hearts.  
In moments of uncertainty,  
be our sure foundation;

in times of change, be our constant guide.  
Keep our going out and our coming in,  
that we may walk with courage, trust, and hope.  
Lead us onward in your presence, now and always.  
Amen

Today's writer

*Zeerak Shahbaz is a first year student at Westminster College, training to be a Minister of Word and Sacraments*

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## **DEC Venezuela Appeal**

There is a Disaster Emergency committee appeal following the earthquake in Venezuela.

You can donate by:

**Online:** <https://donation.dec.org.uk/venezuela-earthquake-appeal>

**Phone:** 0370 60 60 900

**Post:** To send a donation through the post please download our postal donation form.

If you are donating to the Venezuela Earthquake Appeal, please make your donation payable to the DEC Venezuela Earthquake Appeal, PO Box 999, London EC3A 3AA.

Donations can also be made to DEC appeals at your local Post Office branch.

**Text:** To donate £10 to the Venezuela Earthquake Appeal, text DONATE to 70150

### **Prayer for the people of Venezuela**

Loving God,

When the earth trembles and homes fall to dust, hold our hearts, God.

When grief shakes families to the core, hold our hearts, God.

Send our hands and feet to help however we can.

Our sisters and brothers in Venezuela live this now.

God of love and mercy, may we match your love in the way we respond - now.

Amen

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## **Eco Tips for the Summer from Eco Church**

### **Plastic Free July**

It's Plastic Free July and this year we're thinking about laundry, a top source of microplastic pollution. Fibres from synthetic clothes (polyester, nylon, and acrylic for example) shed tiny fibres during washing and drying. These enter the sewage systems and are hard to filter out. Use a microfibre bag or ball to catch the fibres. Learn more about reducing plastic pollution in the laundry process at [plasticfreejuly.org/get-involved/what-you-can-do/plastic-free-laundry/](https://plasticfreejuly.org/get-involved/what-you-can-do/plastic-free-laundry/) and more about this year's campaign at [plasticfreejuly.org](https://plasticfreejuly.org).



### **Looking after wildlife in the heat**

Times of drought and dryness can be dangerous for wildlife. Provide water for birds and insects - put a dish of water out to help wildlife stay hydrated. Insects, small mammals, birds, and even badgers, foxes, and deer could benefit. A stone in a plant saucer helps bees to perch and drink without drowning. These small actions make a big difference and are just some of the ways we can live out our calling to care for God's creation. See our blog on looking after wildlife in the heat for more warm weather eco tips: [arocha.org.uk/looking-after-wildlife-in-the-heat/](https://arocha.org.uk/looking-after-wildlife-in-the-heat/).

