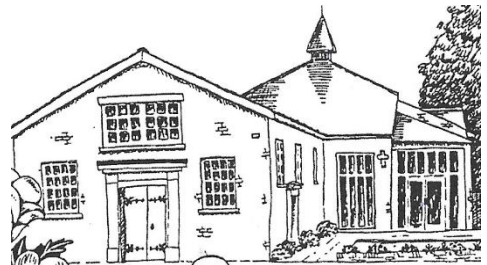


Stepping Stones

Newsletter for

EPPING UNITED
REFORMED CHURCH



ONGAR UNITED
REFORMED CHURCH

September 2026

Minister:
Revd Karen Knight



Minister's Message

Did you survive the heatwaves? As I write we are experiencing another one, hopefully by the time you read this the weather will be cooling down.

Usually in September the talk is about our harvest festival celebrations but this year the harvest was gathered in in July!

We have also had a number of wildfires and we pray for those who bravely fought the fires and those who lost homes and belongings. I was upset to see the devastation caused to Dunwich Heath and Minsmere as I used to spend a lot of time there. I once got lost on Dunwich Heath. I have no sense of direction and I went into the bushes for a quick wee and then couldn't remember which way I was supposed to go. Just as panic set in I realised I was only about fifty feet from the car park! As upsetting as it is to see the burnt landscape, I am not worried about the long-term future as nature has a wonderful ability to renew itself.

People often describe the church as dying, with aging, declining congregations, but the church cannot die. As long as there are people who carry the seed of faith in Jesus Christ the church, like nature, will evolve and renew itself. It may be different, it may be smaller, it may grow stronger but it will continue to be a living, worshipping witness in and to the world

As nature shows us the bounty and resilience of God's creation so the church reflects the beauty of the love of God in Jesus Christ.

God Bless

Karen

revdkaren@gmail.com

07763824943

N.B Karen will be on leave from the 31st August to 14th September, please contact the Church Elders in the first instance.

Epping URC News

Email: urcepping@gmail.com

Website: eppingurc.org

Facebook: @eppingurc

September Preaching Plan, all 11am

6th Graham Watson - *Holy Communion*

13th Local Arrangement – *Season of Creation Service*

20th Joan Smith

27th Ruzive Mhribidi

4th October Rev Karen Knight - *Holy Communion & Harvest Festival*

Dates for your Diary

Book Club

Monday 14th September, 10am

Mission Partnership Vision Day

Saturday 26th September, 10am-2:30pm – full details are below.

Elders Meeting

Monday 28th September, 7pm

Coffee Morning

Saturday 3rd October, 10:30am – Midday in aid of MacMillan.

About 50,000 MacMillan coffee morning events are held around the country each year. The first Coffee Morning happened in 1990. It was a small affair with a simple idea: guests would get together for coffee and donate the cost of their drink to Macmillan. It was so effective that Macmillan did it again the next year – only this time nationally. Since then, the tradition has grown, until now an estimated 1.2 million coffee mornings have been held since the tradition first began. These days, Coffee Mornings come in all shapes and sizes. They can range from small home gatherings to large corporate events; school fundraisers to a gathering with a local community group. But they all have one thing in common – they raise vital funds to support the almost 3.5 million people in the UK living with cancer.



Harvest Festival

Sunday 4th October followed by lunch. We will be collecting non – perishable gifts for Epping Forest Foodbank, please see current most needed items below.



Christmas Panto

You may not yet want to be thinking about Christmas yet, but we have booked another Christmas Panto this year for **Saturday 19th December, 10am** – so please save the date!!!

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to Barbara, Noah and Elspeth who are all celebrating birthdays this month.

Our sister church in Mbare, Harare, Zimbabwe

At our last church meeting the church agreed to support the construction of a new school room and other costs of the school at our twinned church in Mbare, Harare and we received the following:

We receive your greetings with joyful hearts, and we thank God for the enduring partnership between Epping URC and our community here at Mbare UPCS. It is a profound blessing to hear how the Word of God is shaping your congregation, and we are deeply moved by the incredible generosity of your Elders and Church Meeting. Your magnificent gift is an answer to our prayers that will forever transform the learning environment at Mbare Presbyterian College.

Your proposed focus aligns perfectly with our urgent local needs. Your suggestion of a new classroom block to increase capacity is exactly what we have been praying for. Our student numbers continue to grow, and expanding our physical capacity is our highest priority to ensure a safe, conducive learning environment. At the same time, allocating a portion towards teacher salaries and essential school resources will directly alleviate intense local economic pressures.

Your reflections on Matthew 13 deeply resonated with us. In a world full of noise, division, and economic anxiety, your sermon's reminder to avoid the

trap of anger and focus strictly on "what is ours to do" is incredibly timely. By choosing to plant these seeds of generosity in Mbare, you are actively refusing the enemy's weeds and letting God produce a beautiful harvest.

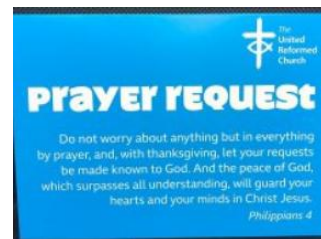
We promise to keep you updated, and we will send photos and reports of the classroom block progress so your congregation can see the fruit of your generosity.

Please convey our deepest gratitude and warmest Christian love to the Elders and the entire family at Epping URC. We will be in touch with the formal banking details within the next few days.

*Blessings in Christ,
on behalf of the Mbare Presbyterian College
Joseph*

Prayer Box

We have a new box for prayer requests which is now ready and is 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.



Epping Forest Foodbank

Currently most needed items:

- Tinned fruit, veg, meat, fish, soup
- Tea bags
- Coffee
- UHT Milk
- Long life fruit juice
- Laundry Tablets
- Toilet Rolls
- Shampoo
- Deodorant



Epping for Everyone

Join us for an evening celebrating the incredible musical talent in our local community when Epping Live! comes to **Epping Hall** on **Saturday 12 September**.



The event will bring together a diverse range of local musicians and performers for an evening of live entertainment, with something to suit a wide range of musical tastes. The line-up includes a rock band, a Britpop covers band, classical piano, folk music, singers and other performers, showcasing the talent that exists within Epping and the surrounding area.

Event details:

Saturday 12 September at Epping Hall, St John's Road, Epping

Doors open: 6.30pm, Music: 7.00pm to 10.15pm

Tickets: £8 per person

Bring your family and friends along for an evening of music and community spirit. Children are welcome, and there should be something for everyone to enjoy. Feel free to bring your own wine and glass. Tea, coffee, soft drinks and snacks will also be available throughout the evening.

Book tickets: > [Book your tickets here](#)

Ongar URC News

Email: mail@ongarurc.org.uk

Website: ongarurc.org.uk

During the last few months, I have been finding it difficult to keep on top of the work I am doing in the church. I have been involved in supervising the work at the cottages, as well as maintaining contact with builders, other contractors involved and the responsible people at Synod. In addition, my preaching commitments have steadily increased due to difficulties with the preaching plan, which often means that I have picked up 'Local Arrangements' for this church and other URC churches in the Mission Partnership. As a result, I have felt that I have had too many 'balls in the air' at one time and have not been able to give my full attention to some aspects.

Things have come to a head with the accidents that various people have had with the result that I have often had to pick up work that they had been doing, as well as continuing with everything else that I do. I have had a meeting with Karen, where we discussed the various organisations in the church, together with where I felt my priorities lie, with the result that, in the light of Pam's scheduled operation in September, I have reluctantly had to temporarily cease Open House. We have also decided that the Church as a whole needs to be made aware of the situation and the difficulties that are now more likely to arise in the future. To this end we have decided that the planned Church Meeting on 3rd October will be a special meeting to discuss how the Church can go forward and our Synod Moderator will be attending to assist us in our discussions. This will then be able to take advantage of the discussions and decisions made at the Vision Day for the Mission Partnership on 26th September.

In the meantime, please prayerfully consider your own role in the church and what you can do to fulfil its mission in this community. Please also pray for this meeting that the Spirit will guide us as to the future.

Joan

Twinkles Toddler Group

Despite the doubts I had at the beginning of 2026 as to its future, I have now got a new helper, Susan, who has a DBS check and safeguarding training through her work with the Scouts, in particular the Squirrels Group at Fyfield.

It was sad to say goodbye to so many of the children in our group in July, but it was good to hear that the friendships they had made through the group are continuing when they enter schools together. We were sorry too that we will now lose touch with so many of the mums, dads, grans and grandads, who we gave got to know and count as friends over the past two or three years. We were also happy to be able to anticipate the birth of another baby during the summer and hope that all went well and that we will see mum and baby in September.

We meet again for the new term on 17th September and will have our Harvest Service in the Church on 24th September, to add to the items donated for the Church's service the following Sunday. We pray that God will send us new children, parents, grandparents and carers in these

coming months so that they may enjoy the fellowship of others and make new friends.

Joan

Open House

Our last coffee morning for this year was on 26th August. We are aiming to start again in January. Most of our friends were able to come which meant we had a full house. Conversations flowed, birthday cake was shared, resulting in a pleasant morning, as usual. Open House has been running for many years and we have all benefited from the friendships we have made during this time. We hope to see everyone back in January.

Pam

Future Services, all 11am

13 th September	Brenda Hall	<i>Local Arrangement</i>
20 th September	Rev Stuart Veitch	
27 th September	Rev Karen Knight	<i>Harvest Service Coffee in hall after Service</i>
4 th October	Graham Watson	<i>Sacrament of Holy Communion</i>
11 th October	Joan Smith	
18 th October	Joan Smith	

Future Diary Dates

- 12th September 5pm Saturday Social Group
- 26th September 10am-2:30pm Vision Day, Epping URC, open to everyone lunch included (see more details below)
- 30th September 7pm Elders Meeting
- 3rd October 10.30am Special Church Meeting

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

Herts and Essex Border Mission Partnership

Mission Partnership Vision Day

Saturday 26th September at Epping URC, 10am to 2:30pm

This is an open meeting for all of the congregations of the seven churches in the Mission Partnership and we will be joined by the Synod Moderator

and the Synod team. We do hope you will come along to have your say and help us discern the future of the Partnership.

Extra parking is available at Epping Catholic Church (top car park only).

Lunch will be provided.

Please speak to the Elders or Karen if you would like to know any more information and if you intend to come as it will be helpful to know numbers for catering.

Welcome Service

A welcome service for Rev Chris Wilson will take place on Sunday 13th September at 6pm at Bishops Stortford Methodist Church, all welcome. Chris is the new minister for Stansted Free Church and Bishops Stortford Methodist Church.

Autumn Fair

Saturday 3rd October, 10am – 1pm at Roydon URC. Stalls & refreshments, free entry.

A letter to all members and adherents of United Reformed Churches and Local Ecumenical Partnerships

Dear Friends,

This letter is designed to give you an indication of the denomination's central finances but is necessarily a brief over-view. Your church (or group) treasurer has a letter giving more detail which we are sure they will be delighted to share with you.

In recent years, on the Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund, we have seen a gradual decline in church contributions and the shortfall on synod's pledges have been made up by the synods themselves.

We are hugely grateful to the synods for their generosity but recognise this is not sustainable over the long term. It is also of concern that the weakness of church contributions weakens the covenant that binds us

together as a denomination, namely that those with resources contribute to supporting those who have less.

The central URC budget for expenditure (for 2026) includes a number of areas of expected costs reduction, significantly in staffing. Some very hard choices have been made and implemented. On the other hand, the URC needs to buy in expertise that we need for our world of increasing regulation and oversight, in view of the scarce resources available from volunteers. We hope that at local church level you will take a moment to reflect on the expertise (paid and unpaid) that steers the URC through all we have to do to be compliant with complex regulation. (Please pray for us!).

We know you have some of these challenges at local level too. We hope that one of the outcomes of the Church Life Review and Church Life Fund going forward will be the availability of URC resources and advice that can be accessed by local congregations. Ask your Church Secretary about these and look at this year's General Assembly decisions.

The annual audited accounts of the URC (for the year ended 31 December 2025) are now finalised and were published just before General Assembly. You can find a copy at <https://urc.org.uk/trustees-report-and-financial-statements/>. The accounts of the M&M Fund (the greater, but not only part of the URC Trust finances) show our total income £670,000 ahead of budget, but our costs were around £610,000 higher than expected. The deficit for the year on the M&M fund was around £650,000. We had hoped for much better.

So, thank you to all who continued to contribute to your local church, thank you to all those churches who met their commitment for 2025 in full, and thank you to all those who, in adversity, continued to treat the M&M Fund as the first priority and paid what they could.

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

Alan Yates (Treasurer) & Vaughan Griffiths (Deputy Treasurer)

Events at Mulberry House

- **Girls night out:** Ellie Ake invites women into a grace-filled encounter with Jesus through Scripture, story, and original artwork. Monday 14th September, 8pm including buffet, £18.
- **Worship Evening** with Ruth Fazal on Monday 28th September, 8pm, £12
- **Time out with God** with Ian Moore on Monday 21st September, The day includes worship songs, Bible teaching and time to reflect and pray.
- **Bible Seminar** with Peter Cockrell on exploring the prophecy of Isaiah on Tuesday 22nd September, 10:30am – 3pm
- **Delving deeper day** with Adam Atkinson, Bishop of Bradwell, “*The inner life: honesty and poetry*” Wednesday 11th November 10:30am – 3pm
- **Ladies Day** with Naomi Hutchinson on Wednesday 25th November 10:15am – 2:45pm, an uplifting day of inspiring Bible teaching with stories and original poetry from Naomi.

All events at Mulberry House, Chelmsford Road, High Ongar, Essex, CM5 9NL run by The Nationwide Christian Trust.

All events require booking beforehand:

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

Season of Creation

At the United Reformed Church’s General Assembly in July 2026, we rejoiced in a shared commitment to creation with friends across many other Churches. The Revd Neil Thorogood, Moderator of the URC’s General Assembly, is embracing the denomination’s move to mark the Season of Creation, which runs from 1 September until 4 October (the Feast of St Francis).

As we resolved to encourage United Reformed congregations “to observe the Feast of Creation in Christ in September from 2026”, we focused on God’s creation and how deeply we belong within it; our lives inextricably and wonderfully part of all life on Earth.

We warmly welcomed the global ecumenical focus upon the importance of creation care and the suggestion that we [mark the first Sunday of September](#) each year with special attention in our worship upon creation and all it means to belong within it. This can lead on into whatever ways this theme can be explored locally in subsequent weeks.

In the light of recent heatwaves and the unfolding of climate and ecological crises, there could hardly be a more critical time for us to bring out this profound theme within our theology and our reading of scripture.

I was kindly invited to write something as this year's Season of Creation approaches. I hope this meditation might also speak more widely...

You speak, and the stars begin their burning.

You speak, and lands emerge from the waters of chaos.

You speak, and the emerald greens of plants beyond number dance in fresh breeze.

You speak, and the seasons begin to weave their rhythms.

You speak, and the oceans and rivers team with amazing life.

You speak, and the stunning flocks fly free across a dazzling sky.

You speak, and the myriad creatures roam within the gardens of your glory.

You speak, and we arrive.

You see the intricate beauty and delicate balances, the interconnection that brings life to a world of wonders; everything depending upon the flourishing of everything else.

And you see that it is good.

We want to see as you see.

We want to listen to the heartbeats of your world, feel the beauty as much as see it, love the fragility and the splendour as you do.

Let us touch your Earth gently.

Teach us the wisdom we risk forgetting;

that life is made from sharing,

restoring what is damaged begins with understanding,

understanding our powerful selfishness is humbling...

humbling and transforming.

Transforming, because we find the place you always made for us:

our home within creation's sanctuary,

our work with the wonders of your world of generosity,

our peace in treasuring the gifts of your abundance,

our life within the sharing.

You speak, and long for us to listen.

At Epping URC we be holding a service on the season of creation on Sunday 13th September.

