



Imagine being a very young and junior nurse coming to terms with nursing people with cancer.

Imagine one of your patients is a young woman, married with two young children, who has had surgery for breast cancer, and this being in the 1970's the surgery was drastic. The need for comfort and reassurance for everyone is great.

Now imagine the candle-lit interior of St Paul's Cathedral; it is the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. The young nurse is seated, waiting to receive Holy Communion. She is praying for the young woman and her family, praying for a cure, praying that all would be well for them. Then she is called forward to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, amid the wonder of Carols and Candlelight.

Imagine this nurse, returning to work after Christmas, discovers that the young woman's cancer had not spread, her prognosis was good and the future looked good. Imagine the exuberant joy she and the young woman and her family must have felt! Was this how Mary felt when she knew she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Saviour of the world; or how the shepherds felt when told of His birth?

For this nurse and young woman, this was when the power of prayer and the glory of Christ became real. So fitting then that this should happen at the time when we celebrate Christ's birth.

Fran Richards



Care Time



Several of our wider church family are 'under the weather' at the moment including: Sue Petch who has had an operation on her neck; Rev Lydia Rapkin (former URC minister) who has had a fall and is in Radwinter Road Hospital, Saffron Walden; her sister Muriel Dalley (URC group secretary for many years) who is also in Radwinter Road Hospital for respite care; and Rev Michael Hayman (former Methodist minister) who has had a slight heart attack. Please remember them all in your prayers.



Congratulations ...

... to Helen Gould and Darran Chopping who became engaged recently. We send them our love and very best wishes.

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The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Sunday 30th December. Please submit articles by Friday 21st December. If you have email access, then we would prefer your articles to be sent to: news@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk.

Alternatively, please pass to one of the editors, or send to 23A Bentfield Road, Stansted CM24 8HP. Thank you.

Editors: Alan Wheeler and Mike & Marion Dyer

Copies of this and previous editions of Imagine can be found on our website www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

What's on in December

Worship at Stansted Free Church

2nd	10.30 am	All Age Worship - 'The Thin Place'
	2.30 pm	Rev Trevor Sands
9th	10.30 am	Holy Communion & Gift Service <i>Breakfast foods & men's clothing for Whitechapel Mission</i> Rev David Mullins
16th	10.30 am	John Banks
23rd	10.30 am	Carol Service
25th	10.30 am	Christmas Day Service - Rev Stuart Veitch
30th	10.30 am	Rev Janet Tollington

Other Activities

Sun 2nd	3.30 pm	Outreach tea in the Foyer
Mon 3rd	8.00 pm	Shalom 7 Blythwood Gardens Margaret Silvester - Slides of Istanbul
Wed 5th	7.30 pm	CTS special meeting in the Hall
Sun 9th	7.45 pm	St Mary's Singers Concert at Water Lane URC
Mon 10th	6.00 pm	Pilots in the Hall
Mon 17th	8.00 pm	Shalom party 7 Blythwood Gardens

Other Christmas Services

Bishop's Stortford Water Lane URC

Mon 24th 11.30 pm Christmas Eve Service led by Jean West

Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church

Mon 24th 4.00 pm Christingle

11.30 pm Midnight Communion

Monday Club

Some of our members have been ill recently so our November speaker was postponed. Nevertheless, we were able to turn the afternoon into another great opportunity for a DIY session - not wallpaper and paint of course but good old honest chat, a challenging quiz and some highly entertaining readings chosen by our members! There will be no meeting in December so we hope this will give those of us that are 'under the weather' a chance to find their health for a full and joyful Christmas.

Phyllis Little

Christmas is a time of giving



Operation Christmas Child

What a fantastic evening we had on 13th November - the hall was a hive of activity, with everyone including the children packing Shoe Boxes. At the end of the evening 185 boxes were filled with a large assortment of goodies that had been given by many generous people. Some items and boxes had been left anonymously in my porch; there were items from people who have been knitting hats, scarves and gloves throughout the year, including members of the ladies group at Bishops Stortford Methodist Church; two people from Water Lane URC, Bishops Stortford brought their collection and joined in the fun of packing; Stansted Tennis Club again donated tennis balls for every box; and Bentfield Primary School filled over 40 boxes. I am also very grateful for the donations of money given to help with the transport costs. By the time the boxes were dispatched the number had risen to over 330, including 70 from the Catholic Women's Meeting.

Once the boxes have been checked at the Harlow centre, they will be packed straight into a container ready to be dispatched to Belarus. Cuddly toys and other items too big to go in a shoe box, together with any baby clothes, are packed into boxes to go directly to children's homes, orphanages or hospitals. Early in the New Year an educational project is starting in Liberia so any excess pens, pencils and note pads will be kept to be sent there.

Nothing is thrown away!!

On behalf of all the children who receive the boxes and the Operation Christmas Child Team, I would like to say a very sincere thank you to everyone who contributed in anyway to make this year's appeal so successful.

Janet Townsend

Shoe Box Packing



Sponsor a Chair!

You may have noticed the two black (comfortable!) chairs in the hall which have been purchased with a small donation. We would like to buy some more of these chairs; each chair costs £18 including delivery. If you would like to sponsor a chair, the treasurers would be very pleased to hear from you! Thank you.

Marion Dyer & Alan Wheeler

A CELEBRATION DAY OF CHURCH MUSIC

On Saturday October 27th, Peter, Michelle, James, Abigail and I set off early in the morning to attend a celebration day of music held at the URC Church in Billericay. It was a nostalgic day for Peter and I as we were going back to the church where we were married.

The church has been renovated much the same as our own and it felt strange to me to look at the changes that have been made and I tried to visualise what it used to be like. The building is situated in Chapel Street and here we saw a vast change - not for the better however! Some buildings were still there but looked rather tatty and where there were once lovely gardens, cars were sitting on paved drives - a sign of the times! My own family home, the Old Manse, had long since been demolished to make way for a large car park for BT vans which were parked at the back of the Post Office - not a sight I really wanted to see when I think of the home where I was brought up.

However, all was not doom and gloom for when we entered the Mayflower Hall, so named because five people from Billericay sailed on the Mayflower to a new life in America, hardly anything had changed. The people were friendly and welcoming and we sat down to coffee and biscuits before walking to the church for an opening service and a short talk about the history of Billericay URC. We then had a session of very lively singing presented by Simon, the Choirmaster at the church. It was good to hear and be part of a large congregation who sang with such enthusiasm! We sang both traditional and new music and it was truly uplifting.

In the second session we gathered into small groups and discussed any musical 'problems' that we found in our own church. It seemed to me that most churches have similar problems and it was interesting to hear the various ways in which each church was trying to address their own particular situation. Smaller congregations, varying styles of music used within services, lack of younger people were all mentioned, but we all came to the conclusion that we were in church to worship God and that our music, whether traditional or contemporary is a great aid to that worship and should continue to be treated as such.

I was pleased to report that Stansted Free Church is doing its very best to give music a place in its services, a place where we can worship God using the talents He has given us both instrumental and vocal. Our own worship group is proof of this and we should be thankful for the talent brought together from both churches represented in our congregation.



After more singing there was a tea provided in the Mayflower Hall and a closing service to end the day. It was an enjoyable experience but it must be said that if the Musicians' Guild is to continue to flourish, our own church should give their support and encouragement to keep the work of the Guild going. Music has a great tradition in our two denominations and we can support this by individual membership and a corporate membership of our own particular church. If you would like to know more about the Musicians' Guild as it is today, I have the information.

Valerie Trundle

Pilots

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY



On Sunday 11th November, some of our Pilots attended the Village Parade and Service. Megan Warwick carried our Pilot flag and Cameron Samuels laid the wreath of poppies on the War Memorial. They both did extremely well and we were very proud of them. They were supported at the Parade by James and Abigail King.

The last Pilots evening for this term is on 10th December.

Stansted Free Church
Methodist / URC
www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Contacts

Minister

Rev David Mullins

Email: minister@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

URC Interim Moderator Rev Janet Tollington

Church Secretary

Betty Francis

Email: info@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Lettings & Church Notices

Janet Townsend

Email: lettings@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Newsletter Editors

Alan Wheeler Mike & Marion Dyer

Email: news@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Pilots

Valerie Trundle

Email: pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Sunday Services

1st Sunday in each month

10.30 am New Directions in Worship

An informal, participative service for all ages

2.30 pm Afternoon Worship

followed by outreach tea

All other Sundays

10.30 am Morning Worship

Children's Work

Alternate Mondays

6 pm Pilots for children aged 5 - 18 years. Tel 81 3433