



**I** imagine a young mother looking fondly at her month-old baby. 'It'll soon be his first Christmas', she says. Can we imagine Jesus' first Christmas?

Enlarging a holiday photo I took of a Spanish nativity in ceramic tile, I tried painting the scene. Under a timber roof supported by bare, stone walls, a shepherd kneels by the crib, another competes with the donkey in the cramped space to stand gazing wonderingly. Mary shows off her baby for all to see and adore. In the foreground a lamb looks towards the child, directing our gaze to the Lamb who bears away the sins of the world. Radiance filling the place, banishes night. Joseph, impassive sentinel, grips a staff topped with bright, yellow star. Why is this one birth of such huge significance, inspiring sermon, painting, meditation, and turning around of life?

Money men say our salvation is in spending our way out of global recession! Into this world God comes as a child whose only shelter is the back of the inn, whose only significance is as a census statistic. While innkeepers and emperors have no place for this child, Mary conceives, carries, delivers, wraps and gently lays him down, prefiguring Christ's future enwrapping and laying to rest upon which hinges the world's healing.

God imagines the world as it *shall* be. In Christ God delivers us from enslavement to inevitability, the lie, 'But that's the way things are!' 'Today, to you, is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord'. The strutting and the arrogant are cast down from eminence, the downtrodden lifted up. We show faith, like Mary, 'Let it be so according to your word!' Live Magnificat! Live imaginatively!

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year from us both!  
Allen & Daphne Morton



## Care Time



Congratulations and best wishes to Helen Gould and Darren Chopping for their wedding at 1.30 pm on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December.

We send Christmas greetings to all of our church family and especially to those who are unable to worship with us week by week because of age or sickness; you are in our thoughts and prayers.

We also think of those who will be away from their families and friends this Christmas, and those living on the streets. We remember the work of the Whitechapel Mission and other organisations providing food and shelter over the Christmas period.

### **Prayer requests for the Sunday service**

We invite you to use the prayer request slips in the foyer and hand in during the first hymn.

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The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December. Please submit articles by Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December to: [news@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto: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](http://www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)**

# What's on in December

## Sunday Worship at Stansted Free Church

7th	10.30 am	New Directions in Worship – The Three Comings
	2.30 pm	Rev Martin Cressey
14th	10.30 am	Rev Trevor Sands - Holy Communion
21st	10.30 am	Rev Allen Morton – Gift Service <i>Breakfast foods &amp; men's clothing for Whitechapel Mission</i>
25th	10.30 am	Rev Allen Morton – Christmas Day Worship
28th	10.30 am	Carol Service

**Morning worship is followed by coffee except the first Sunday in the month, when tea is usually served following the afternoon service.**

## Other Activities

Mon 1st	6.00 pm	Pilots in the Hall
	8.00 pm	Shalom at 7 Blythwood Gardens Rev Cilla Hawkes – Advent Meditation
Thu 4th	8.00 pm	Circuit Meeting in the Hall
Mon 15th	6.00 pm	Pilots Christmas Victorian Evening in the Church
	8.00 pm	Shalom Party at 7 Blythwood Gardens
Sun 17th	11.30 am	Fairtrade goods on sale after service

## Other Christmas Services

### **Bishop's Stortford Water Lane United Reformed Church**

Sun 21st	6.30 pm	Carol Service
Wed 24th	11.30 pm	Midnight Communion - Rev Allen Morton

### **Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church**

Sun 21st	6.30 pm	Carol Service
Wed 24th	4.00 pm	Christingle
	11.30 pm	Midnight Communion - Rev David Mullins

Christmas is  
a time of giving



## Shoe Box Evening 12th November

Phew! What a hectic evening the shoe box packing night turned out to be. The hall was a hive of activity with over 40 people, including children, packing boxes with the marvellous selection of items that had been so generously donated by people in the village and beyond. Some people have been knitting hats, scarves and gloves, puppets and



teddy bears all year. Phyllis Little's needles must have been red hot as she produced 50 teddy bears and 50 hats. Toiletries, balls, pens, pencils, paper, sweets, toys - you name it, it was there. At the end of the evening 193 boxes were filled. By the time the boxes were dispatched, this rose to well over

350, including some from the Catholic Women's Meeting, Bishops Stortford Methodist Women's Meeting, and Water Lane URC.

Brian and I took some of our boxes up to the Harlow centre and saw for ourselves what goes on there. They welcome visitors, so if you are shopping in Harlow do pop in, although it may be too late this year as the warehouse closes on 15th December. Once the boxes have been checked, they are packed in cartons of 15 to 20 boxes, and then when they have 750 cartons ready they will be dispatched to Belarus. The large packs of pens and pencils that we could not use will be going to equip a school in Liberia, and the left over woolly hats to children's hospitals and orphanages. *Nothing is thrown away!*

Donations of money are also very important, as unlike a few years ago when large companies would provide a lorry and a driver to take the boxes abroad, now Samaritan's Purse have to pay for it out of the £2.50 per box suggested donation.

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

*Janet*

# Understanding Worship: even helping to lead it??

If you are sufficiently interested in worship to want to get to know more about it - the various ingredients, including some not common in Methodist or URC worship, how they fit together, how worship can be resourced - then why not come along to the Worship Leader's course starting in January? Stuart Veitch will lead seven sessions that will cover all the above and a great deal more.

If you also feel called to become a Worship Leader you will have been fully prepared for that task, and if your request to be commissioned as a Worship Leader for your church is approved, you will have a new role to play in the worship life of your church.

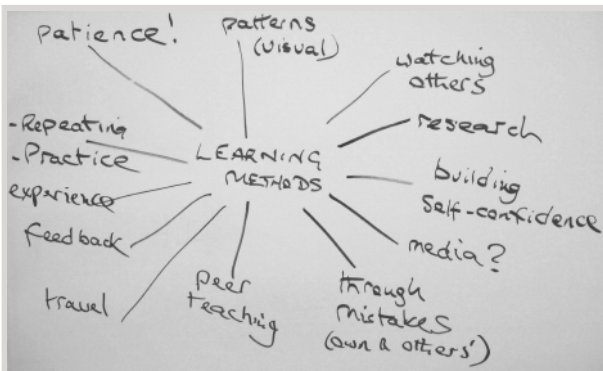
However, you do not have to feel called to a Worship Leader's role to take part.

So whatever your interest in worship -  
*Sign up! Sign up!*  
and we'll give you more details.

Sessions will be held monthly in our church on Thursday evenings at 8 pm. The first three sessions are planned for 15<sup>th</sup> January, 12<sup>th</sup> February and 12<sup>th</sup> March. Please contact me for further details.

Stuart Veitch 815819  
worshipleadercourse@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

## Recent Worship



Stuart's course will include looking at alternative styles of worship. At a 'New Directions in Worship' service at our church, we looked at ways in which we learn, both within and outside our church life.



## Christmas Services and Events



### Celebration of Christmas

**3.30 pm Sat 20th December**  
**St Mary's Church**

(parking at Mountfitchet College)

Carols, Music, Readings, and Poetry

Retiring collection for  
Uttlesford Community Travel &  
Churches Conservation Trust

**All Welcome**

### Village Carol Singing



**7.30 pm Monday 22nd December**  
*corner Maitland Road / Church Road*

**7.30 pm Tuesday 23rd December**  
*corner Blythwood Gdns / Silver Street*

Followed by refreshments  
**Singers & collectors welcome**  
Collecting for Uttlesford  
Community Travel

**Recorder & flute players  
welcome**



The next Traidcraft stall will be after the service on Sundays 14th December and 11th January. If you would like any fairtrade goods at other times, just give me a call.

*Brenda 815819*  
*fairtrade@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk*

### Supporting Whitechapel Mission

At the gift service on 21st December, there will be an opportunity to donate gifts of food and clothing. During the weeks leading up to Christmas, there will be a box in the foyer for anyone who wishes to give a donation to the Mission, rather than sending Christmas cards to other people in the church. In addition, on Christmas morning, our offering will be for Whitechapel Mission.

# Pilots

## An evening with Simon Wilson

We were very pleased to welcome once again Mr. Simon Wilson to our Pilot Evening on October 3rd. Simon brought his brass and silver instruments, trumpets and a trombone and showed the Pilots the instrument that he would be playing on Remembrance Sunday. We very much appreciated Simon's contribution to our Pilot evening, and the children listened well as he played *The Last Post*, the tune that he would be playing on Remembrance Sunday. When he had finished playing, some of the Pilots had a chance to try their hand at playing the instruments. We all really enjoyed the evening.

## Remembrance Sunday

On Sunday 9th November, Samantha Graves, Abigail King and Joseph Wilson, three of our Pilots, took part in the Remembrance Day



service at St. John's. We met at Crafton Green and walked down Chapel Hill with other organisations from the village, our Pilot flag held high. Abigail was our flag bearer and Samantha placed our wreath of poppies on the War Memorial. We entered St. John's Church and Abigail very bravely processed through the Church where

our Pilot flag was received by the Rector and placed with others around the altar. Pilots have taken part in the Remembrance Day service for some years now, and we are always very proud of our children on such occasions.

## Meetings for December Mondays 6 - 7.30 pm

1st Rehearsal for Christmas Entertainment.

15th Christmas Victorian Evening in the Church with refreshments afterwards in the Hall. *All welcome, come in costume if you wish.*

Valerie 813433

# Stansted Free Church

## Methodist / URC

[www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](http://www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)

### Contacts

(All telephone numbers are 01279 unless otherwise stated)

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### 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.

Valerie Trundle Tel 813433 Email: [pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)