

Imagine!



Imagine your home being flooded

Imagine the astronomy professor's delight when Galloway Forest was recently designated one of the world's only five Dark Parks. The other four are all in the USA. Being a very dense forest and situated in a sparsely populated bit of South West Scotland, light pollution is at an unusually low level. From there, stargazers enjoy spectacularly pristine views of the Milky Way, seeing thousands upon thousands more stars than would be visible through the artificial light of urban areas. Looking up at the night sky might also encourage people to raise spiritual, life questions. UK co-ordinator of the International Year of Astronomy, Steve Owens said on a news website: 'Gazing upwards can prompt some profound inward gazing too.'

Imagine the Bethlehem shepherds around their campfire, keeping watch over their flocks, alert to every sound in the surrounding dark, but occasionally gazing up at the moon and stars, wondering, 'What are mere mortals amid such immensity that you, God, should be mindful of us?' So lost against the vastness of it all, yet given regal status: 'You crown us with glory and honour, and put all things under our feet'. In close touch with the rhythms of the natural world, maybe these shepherds were more mindful than most of the one to whom the world truly belonged. To such 'frail creatures of the passing day', to quote Lord George Mcleod, founder of the modern Iona Community, comes the intimations of God. Luke imagines the shepherds as drawn from the edges of existence to centre stage to hear the Good News. The real Saviour of the world is a baby in a manger, not some tyrant who orders armies and crucifies dissent. The God we adore was in a young mother's arms, gazing up at us.

Imagine!

Allen Morton



Care Time



Please remember in your prayers the following members and friends of our church:

Carol (née Pretty) undergoing tests; Phyllis Little recovering from a badly injured leg; the family of Miss Thame who died recently; Jill Walker (wife of local preacher Denis Walker) still undergoing chemotherapy; Jane Sell; Valerie's brother; Ivor Thomas and Mary Heuch who are not able to attend church.

Please also remember that the prayer slips are available for Sunday morning worship and if you are unable to be at church, please pass your requests to Marion Pretty or me and we will make sure the preacher for that Sunday knows.

Betty

info@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

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The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Sunday 27th December. Please submit articles by Friday 18th December 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

- 6th 10.30 am New Directions – The Worship Team
7.00 pm Café Worship - Rev Stuart Veitch & Worship Leaders
- 13th 10.30 am Rev John Buxton - Holy Communion
- 20th 10.30 am Rev Allen Morton - Gift Service & Carols
please bring breakfast foods, toiletries, socks & gloves
- 25th 10.30 am Rev Janet Tollington - Christmas Family Worship
- 27th 10.30 am Rev David Mullins

Morning worship is followed by coffee. All are welcome.

Other Activities

- Tue 1st 8.15 pm Circuit Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Meeting in the Hall
- Thu 3rd 8.00 pm Circuit Meeting at Bishop's Stortford
- Mon 7th 6.00 pm Pilots Christingle Service in the Church followed by refreshments in the Hall
- Mon 14th 8.00 pm Shalom Party at 7 Blythwood Gardens
- Sun 13th 11.30 am Fairtrade goods on sale after service
- Sun 20th 6.30 pm Carol Service at Water Lane URC
Carol Service at B Stortford Methodist Church
- Thu 24th 11.15 pm Midnight Communion at B S Methodist Church

Café Worship comes to Stansted Free Church

7 pm Sunday 6th December led by Rev Stuart Veitch

assisted by worship leaders from Stansted Free Church
and Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church

A Café style Circuit Service with coffee during the service

Open to all - please join us!

Pilots

Once again the Pilots took part in the Remembrance Day Parade and Service in Stansted, and joined with other groups around the War Memorial to lay a wreath on behalf of the Free Church Pilots. The Pilots walked with the main procession, starting at Craffon Green, arriving at the Memorial Gardens just before 11 am.



From the Memorial they processed with the Pilot Flag into St. John's Church and during the Service, Stephanie Cohen presented it at the altar, where it was received by one of our ministers, Rev Allen Morton. This was the seventh year that our group have been involved in Remembrance Sunday. Pilots participating were Stephanie Cohen, Scott Cohen, Adam Cohen and Helen Carter.

On December 7th at 6 pm, the Pilots are holding a Christingle Service in the Church. Refreshments will be served in the Hall afterwards. We need the support of Church Members and friends to encourage our Pilot Group and officers, so please join us if you can.

Valerie Trundle, Captain
pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Thank you

This year I lost the person I cared about the most in the world; but as the months have gone by I have found so much support from many friends in the village and none more than from my ' church family' at Stansted Free Church. I want to thank you all for your love and support and giving me a place to come to however bad I felt. I shall be missing for a few Sundays when I leave for Australia; but I wish all of you a Happy Christmas and a peaceful and good New Year.

Judy

Church members and friends would like to thank Judy for the beautiful candleholders on the communion table, which are in memory of Herbert.

Gift Service 19th December

During our Gift Service on 19th December, there will be an opportunity to bring items for the Whitechapel Mission. As most of you will know, the mission provides thousands of breakfasts to homeless people each year, and also has the largest clothing store in London for the homeless. Breakfast cereals, tinned beans and tomatoes, tea, coffee, and toiletries are welcome, along with gloves, scarves and socks. If you are not able to be at the service, donations may be left in the vestry. Thank you.

Important Church Meeting

Our next Church Meeting will be at 10.30 am on Saturday 30th January. By having the meeting on a Saturday morning rather than an evening we hope to encourage more people to attend. The meeting will particularly focus on looking at the future of our church, and setting some achievable targets for ourselves in line with the Vision 2020 which Allen Morton outlined to us during the Church Anniversary. We really would like to hear everyone's views so please make the effort to attend if you can. If you are not able to attend but have some ideas, please pass them to Allen before the meeting.

URC Synod at Chelmsford

On Saturday 17th October Peter and I attended the URC Eastern Synod in Chelmsford. The day began with opening worship and an update on the progress of the local churches. A welcome was given to new members and Synod appointments were read out.

Closure of Houghton Chapel

After a review of the future of Houghton Chapel in March 2009 it was decided with sadness that the centre will close on 31st March 2010. The Chapel will however, still be used as a community hall for the village. The local Anglican Church have put in a firm offer to purchase the premises for a hall to be used for educational, spiritual and cultural purposes.

Additional Reports to Synod

During the morning session there were other reports given, including Executive, Resource, Pastoral and Mission Committees, and I have copies of these for anyone who wishes to read them in depth.

Child Friendly Church Award

This was awarded to Epping URC and Christ Church, Ipswich.

Workshops

During the day there were various workshops for members to attend. Peter and I attended two sessions, one *Engaging with Families* and the other *Working with Small Numbers of Children and Young People*. We thought these were both appropriate to our own church situation. After discussions in both groups we found that other churches had similar problems to ourselves and we were able to obtain some useful feedback. One main point that we found to be particularly relevant to most churches was to make services attractive to children and young people, not just thinking of our own traditional ways of worshipping.

During the lunch hour we were able to visit the book stall and Fairtrade displays and it was good to talk with other delegates and friends among them being, Sylvia Paine (Pilot Desk Officer) and Henry Playle (Youth Development Officer) and Rev Allen Morton, our Minister. We enjoyed the day and found it rewarding.

Valerie Trundle, Synod Representative



The next Traidcraft stalls will be after the service on Sundays 13th December and 10th January. If you would like any fairtrade goods at other times, just give me a call - don't forget that I have a wide range of Traidcraft goods suitable for Christmas presents. Catalogues are still available in the church foyer

*Brenda
fairtrade@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk*



Shalom Please join us - all welcome

Meetings are 8 pm at 7 Blythwood Gdns unless otherwise stated

Shalom now meets on the 2nd Monday of each month for a more formal session, and on the 4th Monday of each month for an informal 'At Home'. Future dates are:

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| 14th Dec | Shalom Party |
| 11th Jan | Rev Giles Tulk: 'How does the church respond to 21st Century Society?' |
| 25th Jan | At Home |

Marion Dyer

Stansted Free Church

Methodist / URC

www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Contacts

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Fairtrade

Brenda Veitch

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Sunday Service

10.30 am Morning Worship

New Directions - our bi-monthly service in a less formal style

Children's Work

Alternate Mondays 6 pm Pilots for children aged 5 - 18 years.

Valerie Trundle Tel 813433 Email: pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk