



**I** imagine that you were homeless this Christmas. No bed of your own, no warm lounge with its telly, no meals to plan, no presents to buy or receive; no-one cares about you at all. Your Christmas is totally dependent on other people's generosity.

At Christmas we are a lot more sensitive to the issue of homelessness. The Christ child was actually born into homelessness; our Bible readings tell us, and many of the carols we sing reflect on this. Is this why we find the plight of the homeless so much more painful at Christmas? Or is it the irony of our spending fabulous sums of money on food, drink, presents and for some - travel and holidays - whilst celebrating the birth of a homeless baby 2000 years ago? The rest of the year we can cope with the issue, but at Christmas it is just a bit too hard.

Just imagine that a couple of those younger homeless people we might see, surrounded by cardboard, in a redundant shop entrance, were named Joseph and Mary, and in their plight on the night of December 25<sup>th</sup> they had a baby. That's God's Immanuel, there in the shop doorway. *How low could you go, God?* Our attitude to the homeless and jobless in our society, especially at the moment, places this couple and their new child as low as they can go.

So this Advent as we prepare for the celebrations of Christmas, let's realize the enormity of God's act, not just what he did, but how he chose to do it. "Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine." A love that got itself dirty from the first minute, that joined humanity at its lowest, and rubbed shoulders with the humblest and the meekest throughout his stay with us. Let's celebrate that with thankfulness and in humility; it was all done for us.

Stuart Veitch



# Care Time



Please pray for Betty as she continues to recover from her recent operation; for David Keeble's daughter Nicola, as she prepares for the birth of her first baby, and her husband Scott, who has been in hospital and is now awaiting surgery; and for the Vacancy Committee as they continue the search for URC ministers to serve the new West Essex and Bishop's Stortford pastorate (WEBS) of which we are now part. The combined profile of the churches is available in the foyer for anyone to view. Please also pray for **The Place on the Hill** which is continuing to prove very popular, with new people arriving most weeks.

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The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Sunday 29th December. Please submit articles by Friday 20th 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.

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

## Worship at Stansted Free Church

- 1st 10.30 am Don McGregor - New Directions  
8th 10.30 am Rev'd David Keeble - Communion  
15th 10.30 am Mike Render  
22nd 10.30 am Janet Bottoms - Carols and Gift Service  
25th 10.30 am Rev'd David Keeble - Christmas Day (for all ages)  
29th 10.30 am Rev'd Jan Bisschoff

## Other Activities

- Mon 2nd 8.00 pm LPWT Social at 19b Chantry Rd, B Stortford  
Thu 5th 8.00 pm Circuit Meeting in the Hall  
Mon 9th 6.00 pm Pilots in the Hall  
8.00 pm Shalom Party - 7 Blythwood Gardens  
Sat 14th 11.15 am TasteChristmas (see p4)  
4.30 pm Pilots Christmas Production (see p4)  
Sun 15th 11.30 am Fairtrade goods on sale after service  
6.30 pm Carol Service at Water Lane URC  
Sat 21st 3.00 pm Celebration of Christmas at St John's (see p5)  
Sun 22nd 6.30 pm Carol Service at B Stortford Methodist Church  
Sun 22nd 7.30 pm Village Carol Singing (see p7)  
Mon 23rd 7.30 pm Village Carol Singing (see p7)  
Tue 24th 11.15 pm Midnight Communion at B S Methodist Church

### Carols and Gift Service 22nd December

During this service 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, but please label for Whitechapel so that foodstuffs will not be confused with our Stansted Foodbank supplies. Thank you.



## Pilots

Please come and support our Christmas Production, 'Jonah and the Whale', which we are performing at the Church on Saturday 14th December at 4.30 pm.

*Valerie and Peter and all the Pilot team  
Email: [pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)*

## TasteChristmas

A fun Christmas event for all ages with puppets, music, drama and more 11.15 am - noon Saturday 14th December at the Day Centre. It follows the Family Café on that day, but is an entirely separate event, organised and sponsored by Stansted Family Church with help from Stansted Free Church. Everyone is welcome! Come and kick-start your Christmas with something completely different!

*Ros Page*



The next Traidcraft stall will be set up for *The Place* on Wed 11th and Fri 13th December, and will remain in the church until after the service on Sunday 15th December. Catalogues are in the church foyer.

*Brenda  
[fairtrade@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:fairtrade@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)*

## Stansted Foodbank

Our supplies in the foodbank are running low, and we anticipate additional demand over the Christmas period. Any donations of the following would be gratefully received:

Tea, coffee, sugar

Tinned soups, vegetables, tomatoes (not baked beans)

Pasta and rice. Pasta sauces

Longlife milk and juice. Cereals

Tinned meat (eg tuna, ham)

Tinned meat dishes (eg meatball in sauce)

*All items should have several months' shelf life.*

Please leave items in the white plastic boxes in the vestry. Thank you.

*Fran Richards*



With Candlelight, Bells & Sweet Aromas  
come and join our

# Celebration of Christmas Songs and Readings

with contributions from villagers,  
local schools & churches  
**PLUS** the Stansted village choir

**3 pm Saturday 21st December**  
**St John's Church**

*Why not bring your friends and  
family and join the fun?*

Retiring collection for Care Network Uttlesford

*Organised by Churches Together in Stansted*

## Rev'd Martin Cressey

We were very sad to hear that Martin died in September, aged 82 years. In the past, Martin and his wife Pamela often used to lead worship at our church. In recent years, he suffered from Parkinson's Disease so we did not see them so often, but they are both held with much affection. Martin was one of the key figures in the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972, and was a minister for 55 years. He held many major posts, including Moderator of the General Assembly in 1981, and Principal of Westminster College for 17 years. Ecumenism was always at the focus of his ministry, from his work at the Chapel of Unity in Coventry Cathedral whilst serving as a



Presbyterian Minister, through to his greatly-respected work with The World Council of Churches. He chaired the URC's World Church and Mission Department from 1977 to 1983, with visiting lectureships in New Zealand, South Korea and Samoa.

After his retirement, he continued to take services, and for ten years spent one day a week sorting clothes at the Oakington Immigration Centre. Martin was a lovely man, and a great source of wisdom, who will be much missed.

Marion Dyer  
Reproduced in part from Digest URC Newsletter



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**Wednesdays & Fridays**  
**9.30 am - 12.30 pm Free Church**  
**Open on Fri 27th December**  
**Everyone Welcome ~ No Charge**  
**[www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk/theplace](http://www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk/theplace)**

**More helpers are needed on Fridays**  
**If you can help please contact**  
**Marion**

**Thank you**



# **CAROL SINGING**

in aid of

**Care Network (Uttlesford)**

**ALL WELCOME**

**MEET AT 7.30 EACH EVENING**

*Come & join the fun singing your favourite carols in Stansted*

*Collectors also needed each night*

Sunday            Meet at St John's Church.  
22 December    Finish at 45 St John's Road

Monday           Meet at entrance to Cannon's Mead.  
23 December    Finish at 7 Blythwood Gardens



*Followed by seasonal refreshments around 9 pm*



# Stansted Free Church

## Methodist / URC

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

### Contacts

#### **Minister**

Rev David Keeble

Email: [minister@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:minister@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)

#### **Church Secretary**

Betty Francis

Email: [info@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:info@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)

#### **Church Notices**

Marion Pretty

#### **Lettings**

##### **Mike & Marion Dyer**

Email: [lettings@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:lettings@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)

#### **Newsletter Editors**

Alan Wheeler Mike & Marion Dyer

Email: [news@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:news@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)

#### **Treasurers**

Alan Wheeler Marion Dyer

Email: [treasurer@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)

#### **Fairtrade**

Brenda Veitch

Email: [fairtrade@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:fairtrade@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)

### Sunday Service

10.30 am Morning Worship. 1st Sunday - New Directions (Informal)

### Pilots Children's Work

**Monday (monthly)** 6 pm Pilots for children aged 5 - 18 years.

Valerie Trundle Tel 81 3433 Email: [pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)

### The Place on the Hill Drop-In (All Welcome)

Every Wednesday and Friday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

Email: [theplace@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:theplace@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk)