



Imagine what it is like to fast for forty days and nights. Jesus did it. Some people still do it. Most of us do not.

Over the centuries the season of Lent has been marked by various forms of fasting and self-denial. Nowadays it is customary to give up a particular luxury during this time. This could be regarded as just a token gesture rather than a hardship. Indeed, those who are weight-conscious may welcome an excuse to decline offers of cake and biscuits!

However, there is value in at least doing something in Lent. By doing so, we are signalling that Jesus also did something. According to the synoptic gospels, he was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit in order to be tempted. Now that may seem a bit paradoxical, because whenever we recite the Lord's Prayer, we ask not to be led into temptation. Indeed many of us need leading well away from it! I sympathise with Oscar Wilde when he declared that he could resist everything except temptation! Of course, Jesus did resist it, but being tempted was not the end objective of his wilderness experience. He was there to prepare for his ministry in a world where temptation and its resulting sin were as rife as they are today.

What the Devil put Jesus through in the wilderness was just a taste of the real thing. It was not that Jesus himself would have difficulty in handling temptation, but he would be ministering to those who were less strong. As Christians we are empowered to minister to those who have physical and spiritual needs, and we too need to understand how hard it is to set aside the obsessions that afflict the lives of so many.

Traditionally, during the 40 days of Lent, Christians have not only fasted, but have spent time in prayer, and have looked for

opportunities to relieve the suffering of others. These three elements have an elegant balance. By fasting we save money (the cost of food) and time (spent preparing and eating food). The saved money can be used to alleviate material poverty and the saved time can be used in prayer and ministry to those who are poor in spirit. Hopefully this will strike a chord with anyone striving, or indeed thriving (look it up!) towards a zero carbon footprint!

Mike Dyer

In this issue:	Page
Services and events	3
From the Secretary	4
Ecumenical Events	5
Events in Bishop's Stortford	6
Recent Events	6
Anglican - Methodist Covenant	7
The Right Book	8
Jesus' Ministry in Galilee	9
The Key to Human Life	10
Monday Club	11
Contacts	Back cover

The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Sunday 24th February. Please submit articles by Friday 15th February. 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 February

Sunday Worship at Stansted Free Church

3rd	10.30 am	All Age Worship - 'Waiting'
	2.30 pm	Gordon Doyle
10th	10.30 am	Christine Heyhoe
17th	10.30 am	Rev Martin Cressey - Holy Communion
24th	10.30 am	Rev David Mullins

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

Please join us!

Other Activities

Sun 3rd	3.30 pm	Outreach Tea in the Foyer
Mon 4th	6.00 pm	Pilots in the Hall
Mon 11th	8.00 pm	Shalom at 7 Blythwood Gdns Rev Paul Wilkin - Lent Meditation
Tue 12th	8.00 pm	Church meeting in the Hall
Mon 18th	2.30 pm	Monday Club AGM & Social in the Hall
	6.00 pm	Pilots in the Hall
Wed 20th	7.30 pm	CTS Lent Meeting at St John's Church
Sat 23rd	7.30 pm	Quiz at Water Lane URC
Mon 25th	8.00 pm	Shalom in the Hall Stuart & Brenda Veitch - Australia & NZ slides
Tue 26th	8.00 pm	Church Oversight Group at 58 Chapel Hill
Wed 27th	10.30 am	Fairtrade Coffee Morning & Sale in the foyer
Thu 28th	7.30 pm	CTS Lent Meeting in the Church
Fri 29th	7.00 pm	Fairtrade Coffee Evening at 6 Wetherfield

Note: date given in The Link is incorrect

From the Secretary

I am able to give you some very good news. As you are aware we recently had a minister come to 'preach with a view', as it is known in the URC. At a joint Church Meeting with Water Lane URC, on the Monday following his visit, it was agreed to issue a call, and the Stansted members present were unanimous in their decision. Janet Tollington conveyed the results to Allen and he accepted. We look forward to welcoming the Rev Allen Morton and his wife Daphne to Stansted Free Church and Bishop's Stortford URC around the middle of May. I feel he should get on well with the Rector as, I understand, they are both Terry Pratchett fans! If that doesn't mean anything to you, you'll have to speak to Allen about it. I don't know if David shares their views! I'm sure those of us on the vacancy committee are very grateful to Janet Tollington for guiding us through the process thus far. I would like to thank all of you for being so patient and respecting the confidentiality which we had to keep during our deliberations.

Please do your best to attend the Church Meeting on 12th February; everyone is welcome but only members may vote. There are some other dates to note: Fairtrade Coffee Morning and Evening (see next page); a Quiz Night at Water Lane on February 23rd at 7.30; and the Women's World Day of Prayer, which is in our church this year (another 'first' for the Free!) on Friday 7th March at 2 pm, when Brenda Veitch will be the speaker. It would be good if we could get a team together for the quiz, so please let me know if you are interested.

Lent will soon be upon us; please see the next page for details of ecumenical groups arranged by Churches Together in Stansted. We are hosting the discussion and service (led by David) on Thursday 28th February. Please try and support these events which will help us to get to know our fellow Christians in the village. At the end of Lent, on Wednesday 19th March, there is an opportunity to see Riding Lights perform 'Redemption Song' at the Charis Centre in Bishop's Stortford. More details next month.

We have a busy and exciting time ahead, with an Induction to plan and look forward to.

Betty

Ecumenical Events

Stansted Lent Groups

This year for four weeks leading up to Easter we are joining together at each of the churches in Stansted for a short act of worship in the tradition of the host church and a discussion on a Lenten theme.

David Morson

Churches Together in Stansted Lent Meetings at 7.30 pm

Wednesday	20 th	February	St John's Church
Thursday	28 th	February	Stansted Free Church
Wednesday	5 th	March	Friends' Meeting House
Friday	14 th	March	St Theresa's Church

Agape Supper at 6.30 pm

Sunday	16 th	March	Friends' Meeting House
--------	------------------	-------	------------------------

All welcome - please join us



Shalom

On 11th February, at 7 Blythwood Gardens, Rev Paul Wilkin will be leading a Lenten meditation. Although Paul has been to Shalom, this is the first time he has led a session for us, and we are very much looking forward to it.

On 25th February, Brenda and Stuart Veitch will be showing their pictures of Australia and New Zealand. Their talks are always very enjoyable and informative. This meeting will be in the Church Hall.

Both meetings start at 8 pm, and are open to all. Please join us - you will be warmly welcomed!

Marion Dyer

Fairtrade Fortnight **24th February to 9th March**



There will be a coffee morning and sale in our church foyer on Wednesday 27th February from 10.30 am - 12 noon, and a coffee evening at 6 Wetherfield on Friday 29th February from 7 - 10 pm. If you are not able to support these events, then remember that most supermarkets give 20% discount on their Fairtrade items during this time. Why not try a Fairtrade product that you have not tried before?

Brenda Veitch

Events in Bishop's Stortford

Lent Groups at Water Lane 'Lift Up your Hearts'

In the vestry for 6 consecutive Wednesdays, starting on 6th February at 8 pm. All welcome to any or all of the sessions.

Riding Lights - Redemption Song

Wednesday 19th March at the Charis Centre, Bishop's Stortford. A communal experience of theatre and worship. More details next month.

Recent Events

Baptism of Kieran Van de Noort 6th January

It was a joy for the church fellowship, led by Rev Stuart Veitch, to share in the baptism service of Kieran with his parents, Audrey and Harry Van de Noort, their friends and family.



Covenant Sunday 20th January



It was good to have Rev Paul Wilkin to share our recent Covenant Service, especially coming 'hot foot' from St John's where he had led the communion service and David had preached. In his sermon, Paul told us that he grew up a Methodist, and the annual covenant service is something that he has missed since joining the Anglican Church.

Anglican - Methodist Covenant

Paul also talked about the 2003 Anglican-Methodist covenant. This is probably new to many of our URC members, and I suspect that many of our Methodist members may not remember all the details, so we are grateful to Paul for giving us a copy of the covenant document which will be displayed in the foyer.



The covenant is about recognising the similarities between the two churches, and where possible to take steps to bring about closer collaboration in all areas of witness and service, particularly at a local level. Conversations started way back in 1999, and at that time also included the United Reformed Church. These conversations opened up exploration of the issues of eldership and conciliarity between the three churches. These Informal Conversations also provided a vehicle of interaction between the United Reformed Church and the Formal Anglican - Methodist Conversations.

Paul referred to 'visible unity' in his sermon; this is part of the first commitment, which states: 'We commit ourselves, as a priority to work to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches, on the way to the full visible unity of Christ's Church. In particular, we look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible a united, interchangeable ministry.' Watch this space!

Marion Dyer

The Right Book

“Can you fix it?”

“Well, probably, but first I must study the instruction manual!!”.



This statement would be relevant for any truculent machine from car to computer. In the same way, if we were taking up say, youth work, we would seek instruction from the relevant manual. Now in life, as we are imperfect, we find we also need to seek instruction. In this we are fortunate! We have available an instruction manual that covers all aspects of our existence from birth to death, and more to the point, one that was composed by the inventor. It is widely available, printed in many languages, given away freely in schools, hospitals and the armed forces, and taught from every Sunday pulpit the world over.

But, as the saying goes, being a stubborn people, only as a last resort do we read the instructions!

William Frogley

Do you have any thoughts you would like to share? Please submit to the editors by 15th February (see page 2 for details).

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee

During Lent this year the lectionary readings in Matthew are about the first stage of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. What was Galilee like?

Well for one thing it was as far away north of Jerusalem as you can get, and with Herod Antipas in a mood for cutting off heads (John the Baptist), that would be good tactics. Jesus hardly wanted to face death before he'd even started his teaching!

It was incredibly fertile. It was said that *it was easier to raise a legion of olives in Galilee than to bring up one child in Judah*. As a result it was enormously heavily populated. In the 50 by 25 miles district it probably had a population of well over 3 million people. Plenty of people then, and a people who were by reputation very open to new ideas, not like the traditionalists of Judah. The people of Galilee were Jews but of very mixed origin. Furthermore Galilee was the spaghetti junction of Jesus' time; two of the most important international highways crossed in Galilee, and as news and ideas travelled along these highways as well as people, the Galilean people were never short of a thing or two to think about.

So it was to Capernaum that Jesus went first, leaving Nazareth, his home town, where Luke tells us he had a narrow escape, and to the best of our knowledge, he never returned to his home. A prophet is not welcome in his own home, not even Jesus.

So it was amongst the traders, travellers, farmers and tax collectors of the cosmopolitan town of Capernaum that Jesus first went. A good choice it seems, for we read that huge crowds flocked to hear him teach and see his miracles. John the Baptist had called people out to the desert to be admonished and commanded to repent and to be baptised. Jesus went to where people were, and there he loved them. Read all about it in Matthew 4: 12 to 19: 1. I bet it wouldn't take you very long to read the whole passage like a story, at one sitting. That's an idea for Lent!

Stuart Veitch

The Key to Human Life

Last year I visited Bath Abbey and picked up a leaflet which I found interesting so I thought I'd share part of it with you.

Jesus was born to a peasant woman, in an obscure town in Palestine, over 200 years ago. During the first 30 years of his life he shared the daily life and work of an ordinary home. For the next three years he went about teaching people about God and healing sick people on the shores of Lake Galilee.

He had no money. He wrote no books. He commanded no army. He wielded no political power. During his life he never travelled more than 200 miles in any direction. He was executed by being nailed to a cross at the age of 33.

Today nearly 2 billion people throughout the world worship Jesus as divine - the son of God. Their experience has convinced them that in the wonders of nature we see God as our loving Father; in the person of Jesus we discover God as Son; and in our daily lives we encounter this same God as Spirit. Jesus is our way to finding God: we learn about Jesus by reading the Bible, particularly the New Testament and we meet him directly in our spiritual experience.

Jesus taught us to trust in a loving and merciful Father and to pray to him in faith for all our needs. He taught that we are infinitely precious, children of one heavenly Father, and that we should therefore treat one another with love, respect and forgiveness. He lived out what he taught by caring for those he met: by healing the sick - a sign of God's love at work; and forgiving those who put him to death.

Jesus' actions alone would not have led him to a criminal's death on the cross; but his teaching challenged the religious and moral beliefs of his day. Jesus claimed to be the only way to reach God. Above all, he pointed to his death as God's appointed means of bringing self-centred people back to God. Jesus also foretold that he would be raised to life again three days after his death. When three days after he had died on the cross his followers did indeed meet him alive again, frightened and defeated men became fearless and joyful messengers.

This message of good news is the reason why all over the world there are Christians who know what it means to meet the living Jesus, and who believe he alone has the key to human life.

Betty

Monday Club

We started our eighth year by meeting together for a fine lunch at the Cock Inn, which was most enjoyable. On February 18th our AGM will be followed by a social afternoon. Why not come and join a very relaxed and friendly group, where you will be made most welcome? Then on March 17th come and hear Christine Chapman giving an illustrated talk. Christine is a much travelled and interesting speaker. Just to remind you that we meet in the hall on the third Monday of each month at 2.30pm.

A Thank You

One signs the 'Get Well' cards at Church but it is not until you are on the receiving end that you realise what it means. Thank you for the flowers and messages delivered by Janet.

Food For Thought

In a Church magazine, a Churchgoer had written, "I've gone to Church these last 30 years and heard more than 3,000 sermons in my time and yet I can't remember a single one of them! I think I am wasting my time and that of the preacher". But another reader had answered, "I've been married for 30 years and I can't remember one entire menu that my wife cooked, but they all nourished me and gave me strength. If my wife hadn't given me those meals I would be physically dead!". That set me thinking; "Likewise if I had not gone to Church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today"

Phyllis Little

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 (except this 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 813433