

Imagine!



Imagine a church
full right to
the gallery!

Welcome to the first issue of our new Free Church newsletter - a newsletter with a different name. *The Messenger* has carried the message faithfully for many years in the United Reformed Church.

We are not throwing it away as something that is passé but we do need to reflect that we are a new community formed from two traditions.

At the beginning of our new church, we invite you to *imagine* what it could be

Can we find the imagination to take a great leap forward in faith in Stansted Mountfitchet?

If we imagine the cells in the brain to be as numerous as the stars in the galaxies in the Milky Way, maybe we can gain a new sense of God's power and how it can enable us. Imagine each cell vibrant with the fire of the Holy Spirit!

We can be sure God is within us as well as all around us. Let us be confident in his presence and his desire to shower upon us his greatest gifts.

Can we find the love within us to affirm each other and rejoice in each other's gifts?

Let us rejoice in being both Methodist and United Reformed, to treasure the richness of both traditions and at the same time rediscover the 'oneness' we have lost through historical events.

God is the God of all time and is certainly the God of the 21st century. Let us not fear the present time but walk on together with Christ into the future, caring for and nurturing each other through the power that the Holy Spirit gives us, confident that he wants to realise our deepest desires.

Alan Wheeler

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The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Sunday 28th January. Please submit articles by 21st January. 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. If you have any queries, please contact us. Thank you.

What's on in January

Sunday Worship

7 th	10.30 am	Mike Dyer & Alan Wheeler 'Getting Changed' - All Age Worship
7 th	2.30 pm	Rev David Simpson
14 th	10.30 am	Betty Kime
21 st	10.30 am	Rev David Simpson Covenant Service & Communion
28 th	10.30 am	Rev Keith Page

***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	7 th	3.30 pm	Please note no Afternoon Tea
Mon	15 th	8.00 pm	Shalom Social at 7 Blythwood Gardens
Mon	22 nd	2.30 pm 6.00 pm	Monday Club AGM & Social in the Hall Pilots in the Hall, for children aged 5 - 13
Wed	24 th	7.30 pm	Ecumenical Wednesday Prayers at St John's for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
Mon	29 th	8.00 pm	Shalom - Chinese New Year 7 Blythwood Gardens

Advance Notice

On **Sunday 18th March** There will be a church lunch, during which we will have an opportunity to say goodbye to David & Sylvia Simpson. David retires at the end of March and 18th March will be his last service with us. More details to follow, but please book the date now (see also page 6).

From the Minister

Another Christmas is over and it may seem as though nothing much has changed. Soon the Christmas decorations will be safely packed away for another year and the house returned to normal. So what has changed? Terror continues on the streets of Baghdad, death in Afghanistan and Palestine, worrying tension over Iran and North Korea, climate change and global warming. So, what has changed? Not much you may say, but how about you? You personally I mean? Has Christmas changed you? Did you see the excitement in children's eyes as they unwrapped their gifts on Christmas day? Did you detect the real sincerity in the 'Thank you' of a friend or loved one? The kiss on the cheek given from a happy, thankful heart? Are you sure nothing has changed this Christmas? For little things, given and received in love, however insignificant they may seem at the time, have a way of changing human lives.

A baby born in a manger 2000 years ago was seen at the time by most as just another insignificant event, just another baby to another pregnant teenager; what's new? But that birth has changed the shape of this world forever. God's gift to the world, a gift of unimaginable generosity and love for you and me. Are you sure nothing has changed for you this Christmas?

A peaceful and healthy 2007 to everyone.

David

Shelter from the storm

Prayer pointers



Pray that God will shelter the tender shoots of church unity...
Pray that He will give shelter to those who sleep in shop doorways...



In a Nutshell

- 1 If I had a white stone what would be written on it?
- 2 Which word was wrong with the Temperance Seven?
- 3 A kumquat means golden yellow but in which language?
- 4 Why does hair go grey?
- 5 Where are the seven deadly sins in the Bible?

Answers next month

Collection for Lebanese Evacuees

Church members very generously donated £250 to be spent on essentials for the Lebanese evacuees living in Stansted. All their furniture and clothing requirements have been met by kind gifts, but we have bought them cutlery and pots and pans. However, most of the money is being spent on transport, as they have to go to Braintree Job Centre regularly. Two of them have already obtained full employment and others have part-time jobs. Until they get full-time jobs they must attend Braintree, and at the moment this is weekly. They are most grateful that there are people willing to drive them most weeks and it is fortunate that we are able to reimburse the drivers. Those who attended the Remembrance Day service will have seen one of the Lebanese lay a wreath at the memorial. This was partly a gesture of thanks to all the people of Stansted, who have welcomed them into the community.

Catherine Dean

In addition, there are some families in Newport who I have got to know. One family is expecting their third child in March. If you have any baby equipment to donate (not clothes) please contact me. They also need bunk beds. Thank you.

Marion Dyer

Monday Club

The joy of the Monday club is that it continues to draw friends from outside the immediate circle of the church membership. Because we meet in the afternoon we get a chance to linger over a cup of tea and have a good chat with our excellent speakers. We finished the year with Christmas carols and a little quiz. We look forward to seeing many of you there on 22nd January at 2.30 pm for our AGM and social.

Phyllis Little

From the Secretary

As you will have read, our URC minister, David, is retiring in March. Contributions for a gift to me by 18th February please.

Our gift service on December 17th was different in that we had no electricity. Fortunately the heating had been on before the power went off so the church was warm, but of course there was no organ or electric piano. A quick change of some of the hymns, as one or two would have been difficult to sing unaccompanied; Fran dashed off to get her flute and Marion set up her keyboard which has battery back-up. Sadly the battery died after a couple of hymns, but Fran didn't run out of wind and kept us in tune. So what could have been a problem turned into a very good service. We did miss the coffee and mince pies though!

The year 2007 sees the 200th anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. We look back and wonder how people in the 1800's could have condoned slavery, and yet it still goes on today. In the local paper recently there was a report of someone being charged with illegally bringing children into the UK for immoral purposes. We may think that it isn't our problem but these children came into England at Stansted Airport; it can't get any closer than that. The paper also reported that a number of these children have now disappeared. We can't even begin to

Imagine what their lives must be like. Do we sit back like those in the 1800's or do we do something about it? There is an organisation called 'STOP THE TRAFFIK' which I ask you to consider supporting. I quote from their website:

STOP THE TRAFFIK is a global coalition of organisations working together to fight against people trafficking, by raising awareness on a subject that is little known or understood. STOP THE TRAFFIK will call for change and freedom. There are currently over 300 member organisations, including businesses, faith groups, community groups and charities....

The four key areas that STOP THE TRAFFIK is focused on are advocacy, education, fundraising and Freedom Day. Through advocacy and education, STOP THE TRAFFIK will demonstrate to the public ways in which they can get involved and help change people's futures. At the heart of the campaign is the Global Declaration Card. Thousands of cards signed by people worldwide will be delivered to the United Nations. These aim to pressurise the UN and individual governments to bring about a change in legislation and policies, resulting in protection from people trafficking.

The initiative will climax on March 25th 'Freedom Day' with local events worldwide

For more information visit www.stopthetraffik.org. If you don't have internet access I can print it for you. *Can we do nothing?* I have printed a copy of their petition which I'll leave in the Church; *please consider signing.*

Finally, we hope any of you who have been unwell will now be feeling much better and looking forward to better health in 2007.

Betty

