

**I** imagine sitting on a beach watching the sun set, singing Christmas carols on Christmas Eve, lighting candles as the sun dips below the sea's horizon. Imagine that everyone is dressed in light summer clothes and most are wearing hats to keep the heat off. 'Christmassy'?

Well Brenda and I don't have to imagine, because all this was our experience last December in South Africa. We did manage some Christmas services, and a turkey dinner. Yet it just wasn't the same. Despite our complaints about the over-commercialism of Christmas in the UK, and the rotten winter weather, there is still something about our whole Christmas package that prepares us for the festival.

Before we left for South Africa we heard the notices with all their details of the events leading up to Christmas and realised how much we would miss all these, and how important they are. We were reminded of how important 'tradition' is, and how we often take it for granted. Traditions help us to belong. It's true traditions need to change, but the role of tradition in our worship and our lives should not be underestimated.

At Stansted the two traditions from the URC and Methodists must change to form a new church, but we should tread carefully, respecting both of these traditions, so that out of the two, a new tradition can be born that enables all of us to feel that we belong, and points us forward to a future rooted in God's new call to us, to be his church for the people beyond our walls.

Stuart and Brenda Veitch



# Care Time



A number of our church family have been unwell recently, and we ask you to remember them in your prayers:

Katie Pye, a former member of Pilots; Cherry Lewis, one of our Pilots leaders; Sue Petch, recovering from a neck operation; Mary Heuch, Mary Ecclestone, Rose Trundle, Hazel Fuller and Dora Camp, who are unable to get to church at the present time.

We also remember Margaret Silvester whose mother Ellen died recently. Ellen always supported Margaret in her church work, and until recently, used to come to our Methodist social events.

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The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Sunday 25th March. Please submit articles by 18th March. If you have email access, then we would prefer your articles to be sent 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. If you have any queries, please telephone us. 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 March

## Sunday Worship

4 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	The Free Team - All Age Worship <i>Setting Free</i>
4 <sup>th</sup>	2.30 pm	Rev David Simpson <i>followed by tea in the foyer - all welcome</i>
11 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Mike Render
18 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Rev David Simpson & Rev Keith Page Communion & David's last service with us
25 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Doug Coulton

## Other Activities

Sun	4 <sup>th</sup>	3.30 pm	Afternoon Tea
Mon	5 <sup>th</sup>	2.30 pm	Daffodil Day Westminster Central Hall
		6.00 pm	Pilots in the Hall, for children aged 5 - 18
Tue	6 <sup>th</sup>	9.30 am	Church Oversight Group Meeting
		2.00 pm	Lent Group at 49 Recreation Ground
Thu	8 <sup>th</sup>	8.00 pm	Methodist Circuit Meeting in the church
Fri	9 <sup>th</sup>	8.00 pm	Lent Group in the church foyer
Mon	12 <sup>th</sup>	8.00 pm	Shalom in the hall - Keith's Sabbatical
Tue	13 <sup>th</sup>	2.00 pm	Lent Group at 49 Recreation Ground
Wed	14 <sup>th</sup>	8.00 pm	Lent Group in the church foyer
Sun	18 <sup>th</sup>	12 noon	Church Lunch & farewell to David & Sylvia
Mon	19 <sup>th</sup>	2.30 pm	Monday Club - Ted Pretty
		6.00 pm	Pilots in the Hall, for children aged 5 - 18
		8.00 pm	Lent Group in the church foyer
Tue	20 <sup>th</sup>	2.00 pm	Lent Group at 49 Recreation Ground
Mon	26 <sup>th</sup>	8.00 pm	Shalom at 7 Blythwood Gardens William Frogley - Bible Study
Tue	27 <sup>th</sup>	2.00 pm	Lent Group at 49 Recreation Ground
Wed	28 <sup>th</sup>	3.00 pm	Spring Rally at Sawston Free Church
		8.00 pm	Lent Group in the church foyer

## April

Sun	1 <sup>st</sup>	6.30 pm	Lent Groups' Agape in the hall
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## A man's work is never done ....

Sylvia: Well David, you're fast coming up to retirement. Are you looking forward to it and how on earth are you going to fill your time?

David: You tell me? Earlier I was very apprehensive but as the time draws closer I'm beginning to look forward to it. Seeing more of the grandchildren and watching them grow up in a way I couldn't with my own children due to pressure of work. Going to a rugby or football match without feeling guilty that I should be doing something else. Building a model railway. Viewing the heavens through a telescope. Walking, reading, bird-watching.

Sylvia: So are you going to let me in on the plan? Or are you going to keep it to yourself as usual?

David: First a sabbatical, six months, a year perhaps, space to think and consider the future. Maybe take a Doctorate in Theology, maybe not, maybe best to wait and see what surprises God has in store for us; after all, our life over the last twenty five years has been one surprise after another.

Sylvia: What about all the things you've been telling your congregation you're so good at, like cooking and ironing and washing-up?

David: Did I ever say that?

Sylvia: You most certainly did, most weeks!

David: Well I'd love to darling, but I'm fearful of getting under your feet.

Sylvia: No problem, I've just bought you the lovely apron you've always wanted and there will be plenty of room in the kitchen, so please don't worry.

David: I suppose so!





# Pilots

During our last Pilot session the following children received membership badges which were presented by one of our ministers Rev David Simpson.

Deckhands: Lucy Carter

Adventurers: Sam Carter

Voyagers: Sean Clarke

Some other Pilots received replacement badges, having mislaid their original ones! This is not however a regular practice in our Pilot company and the children were asked to take greater care of any equipment given to them in the future.

At seven o'clock David arrived to join the session and the children were delighted to see him dress up in an apron and prepare to do some "Hoovering"! His message to the children was "As a Hoover has a filter, to prevent unpleasant items entering the body of the machine, so we as human beings have the Holy Spirit to help us filter away any unkind thoughts we may have".

As always the Pilots enjoyed a good evening.

Valerie Trundle



## Congratulations ...

and Best Wishes for the future to  
Matthew Francis and Kim Sparwell  
who were married on 14th February,  
St Valentines Day.

Matthew is Betty's son and attended  
Stansted United Reformed Church

## David Simpson

### This is your life at Stansted 1999-2007

In early 1999 we had been without a stipendiary minister after the Revd Margaret Mackay had left in April 1998, although we were in the fortunate position to have Revd Lydia Rapkin as our non-stipendiary minister. At that time Stansted was part of a group comprising Stansted, Newport and Clavering URCs; we were also in a linked pastorate with Saffron Walden URC.

As is the URC practice, the Moderators' Meeting put forward the name of a person who they think is suitable for the vacancy. The Moderator recommended that we considered a non-stipendiary minister who was in his final year at Westminster College, Cambridge, prior to entering full time ministry. So the cv of David Simpson arrived. This was no ordinary man; he'd had quite an exotic past! Having been brought up in a small Scottish fishing village, he started his working life in the local mine. After he and Sylvia married they began their travels, living in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Iran and the Oman before returning to the UK, where David worked in the pharmaceutical industry while serving as a non-stipendiary minister and prison chaplain.

The church decided that we must meet this man and on a cold winter's morning, the Elders from the Stansted Group and Saffron Walden met David in the church at Newport. The church had instructed us to ask David's opinion on various things but the most important thing we had to discover was 'can we understand his Scottish accent?' We had been acquainted with a Scottish minister in the past who had a very broad accent which we had found difficult to understand. Well David passed the test and we recommended to the Church Meeting that David be 'asked to preach with a view to becoming our minister'. This is another URC/Congregational custom.

So on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1999 David 'preached with a view' and the rest is history. We have enjoyed nearly 8 years of his ministry. He has

led us on our spiritual journey, seen us through the setting up first of the LEP in Clavering and now our joining together here in Stansted. In 2003 the URC was re-organised and sadly the Stansted Group disbanded; Newport and Clavering were to link with Saffron Walden, and Stansted with Bishops Stortford. We were then in the difficult position of interviewing our own minister for the job which he was already doing!

We thank God that David was called to us. We cannot thank David enough for his devotion to his 'flock', his tireless visiting, wise advice, his friendship to all, and of course we cannot fail to thank Sylvia for her support. We will miss them, but we have so many happy memories.



How often have we had the phone call "Can you read tomorrow, it's Sam 6 v 1-7?" "Which book of Samuel?" we ask. Then the exasperated reply "I mean Psalm"! Sometimes the accent did catch us out.

The Music Group were delighted when David could join them, such as during our Inaugural Celebration Service on 5th November.

Will we forget the Whit Sunday when the helium balloon, which represented the Holy Spirit, slipped its moorings and floated around the church for several weeks? Or the Sunday when he left the service and over the sound system we heard his footsteps, the car being opened, some rummaging around and then more footsteps as he returned with whatever he'd forgotten. Happy days.

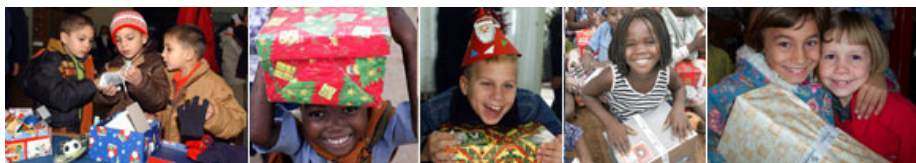
But things move on. David and Sylvia deserve a rest, more time to spend with their family and more time with each other. We wish them well.

Christmas is  
a time of giving



I have just received a report from Samaritan's Purse on the 2006 shoe box appeal. A staggering 1.24 million boxes were sent from the United Kingdom to 12 countries in Eastern Europe and Africa. Our 260 odd boxes seems very small in the big scheme, but they are important and thank you to everyone who helped in any way.

The boxes from the Harlow distribution centre were sent to Romania and in a the village of Sighetu Marmatiecin, Northern Romania, six year old Mehi can now start school thanks to his box, as gypsy children are not allowed to go to school until they can provide their own pens, pencils and note pads. "I have been given the best box in the village" he said. His mother collected the empty cardboard carton that the shoe boxes were packed in to use as a rug in the family's small wooden home that they shared with 16 other people.



There are more heart wrenching stories, and pictures like these on their website [www.samaritanspurse.uk.com](http://www.samaritanspurse.uk.com). It's worth a look.

As you go round the shops in the next few months watch out for bargain items suitable for the boxes for this year and if you want to do something, start knitting hats, gloves and scarves etc - it all helps when November comes. When you buy new shoes please take the box and these can be left at 58 Chapel Hill any time. Thank you all once again for your support.

Janet Townsend

## From David & Sylvia

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Stansted Free Church

This is my last contribution to the newsletter, our journey together is drawing to a close. It has been an honour and great privilege to work with you for the last seven and a half years (my, how the time has fled!) and to be party to, and witness to the confidence and eagerness with which you take on board the work of God's Kingdom. Be it refurbishment of buildings, or work with Young People, nothing daunts you. Your willingness to put aside fear of change and insecurity, and launch yourselves into whatever God presents to you, is extraordinary. The eagerness and ease with which two separate communities embraced the idea of a united church and swept aside all the obstacles that arose along the way in record time, is a clear indication that a greater power is at work!

As a united church you have a very promising future ahead of you, and many opportunities to make a real difference in the community of Stansted Mountfitchet, which I have no doubt you will. Thank you for all the love, support, and care you have given Sylvia and me, and for the way in which your church family made us your own. You have given us so many happy and enduring memories to take with us on our journey; may God continue to bless your work and shower his gifts upon you. Our Love and every best wish for the future.

*David and Sylvia*

# Music 4 Mission

**3 - 5 pm Sunday 29th April Stansted Free Church**

Gospel, choral & popular music performed by ~  
Dave Law ~ Bishop's Stortford Methodist Choir

Stansted Music Group ~ Charity

Tickets £5 in aid of Methodist Fund for World Mission  
available from Marion & Mike

## From the Secretary

As you will have seen, a lot of things are happening this month, including hosting the Bishops Stortford Methodist Circuit meeting (a first for Stansted Free Church) and the Lent Groups. In amongst these will be David's last service and farewell lunch on March 18<sup>th</sup>. If you have forgotten to put your name down for the lunch please speak to me, as we will be able to fit in one or two extras.

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March is the date of this year's Methodist Daffodil Day in Methodist Central Hall, London, starting at 1.45 pm. This is always a spectacular event with fantastic singing in true Methodist style. There is a coach going from Saffron Walden, which will pick up at Stansted if required. Please contact Eileen Salmon on 01799 500254 if you would like more details. Saffron Walden also have their own Daffodil Day on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March. Again, Eileen is the contact.

If you're free on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> March at 3pm there will be a very interesting afternoon at Sawston Free Church, when the speaker at the Spring Rally will be Revd Alwyn Knight. Alwyn was the minister at Bishops Stortford URC before David. He has just returned from three months as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Hebron on the occupied West Bank. He will be able to give us a first hand account of the situation there. If you would like to go but need transport let me know and we will see what can be arranged. Sawston would like an idea of numbers for catering purposes so please let me know by March 14<sup>th</sup> if you intend to go.

During our time without a URC minister and the changeover from Keith to David Mullins, and now that we have a larger congregation, it is important that we maintain pastoral contact, so the Church Oversight Group have appointed Janet as Pastoral Secretary. This means all matters of pastoral concern, illness, bereavement etc are passed to Janet; she can then ensure that if necessary a minister is informed or a deacon can visit or arrange whatever help is required. Hopefully this will mean that no one gets missed out because we all think someone else is 'doing something about it'!

Our premises are being used much more by the local community, which is great, so we need to be careful when making arrangements to check that the hall, vestry, church or foyer are not already booked. It's difficult when we have been used to popping in when we have a spare moment to do a few odd jobs, so if we can remember to check with Janet first it will make life easier.

## New directions in worship - 4th February 'Ordinary People, Extraordinary God'



Come and find out what 'Setting Free' means for us today  
Sunday 4th March at 10.30. All welcome.

### *Persistent!*

I am not talking about us! We waver from one belief to another. We doubt both ourselves and whatever is our favourite belief of the moment. We require constant proof that our belief is justified and worthwhile, or we will return - or turn - to whatever is the fashion.

Am I treating us too harshly? Look in the Old Testament if you want proof. Now look at our Lord. He has shown us he loves us; in the Old Testament; before he came to us. He has also given us a pattern to live by (which we consistently fail).

Seeing the mess we were getting ourselves into, he has come and lived among us; to the same principles laid out previously. Having been rejected by us (as he said he would be) he has ever come back to support us. *Now, that's persistent!*

William Frogley

# **Stansted Free Church**

## **Methodist / URC**

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

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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. Tel 813433