



Imagine what would have happened if Jesus had lived well into old age and died quietly in his bed. What impact would his long life have made on our world, on your life and mine?

You might think that more is better. After all, a long life would have given Jesus greater opportunity to develop his teaching, to train his followers and to firmly establish a community that would be true to his ideals; but even so, the most likely outcome would have seen Jesus lost to history, a fine teacher quickly forgotten by succeeding generations.

As strange as it may seem, the death of Jesus is the key to his enduring significance. That is why we name the Friday of his death, 'Good'. But for the death of Jesus, albeit in the most horrific and shameful way - betrayed, handed over, beaten, mocked and finally crucified - we would have little cause to remember him. That's the irony; those who killed him sought to put an end to him, to obliterate his memory and to discredit him.

But the death of Jesus was a beginning not an ending. On Easter Day, that new beginning is affirmed by God's great act of resurrection. Death gives way to life, and love given freely for others is revealed as the ultimate meaning of the universe. A new community rises out of the ashes of despair and defeat, an irrepressible hope is imparted, and a new world is opened up!

In the purposes of God, the death of Jesus that looked like a great tragedy - a life cut short and potential left unrealised - is transformed into a life-giving and world-renewing vision.

As St Paul put it, "There is nothing in life or death that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing, nothing at all - God's love is the ultimate reality. Imagine that! Better still - know it, feel it, live it!

David

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The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Sunday 30th March. Please submit articles by Good Friday, 21st March. 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 March

Sunday Worship at Stansted Free Church

2-	10.30 am	The Worship Team - Lenten Journeys
	2.30 pm	Faith Paulding followed by tea in the foyer - all welcome
9.	10.30 am	Maureen Kendall
16.	10.30 am	Rev Stuart Veitch
23.	10.30 am	Easter Day Holy Communion Rev Janet Tollington
30.	10.30 am	Rev David Thompson

Easter Services

Maundy Thursday 20th March

8.00 pm Reflective Service at Water Lane UR Church

8.00 pm Tenebrae with communion
at Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church

Good Friday 21st March

10.30 am Rev David Mullins at Stansted Free Church

4.15 pm Walk of Witness from St Theresa's Church

Other Activities

Sun 2 nd	3.30 pm	Outreach Tea
Mon 3 rd	6.00 pm	Pilots in the Hall
Wed 5 th	7.30 pm	CTS Lent discussion and worship Quaker Meeting House
Mon 10 th	8.00 pm	Shalom at 7 Blythwood Gardens
Fri 14 th	7.00 pm	Stations of the Cross at St Teresa's followed by CTS discussion
Sun 16 th	6.30 pm	Lent Groups Agape Quaker Meeting House
Mon 17 th	2.30 pm	Monday Club in the Hall
	6.00 pm	Pilots in the Hall
Wed 19 th	8.00 pm	Riding Lights - Redemption Song Charis Centre, Bishop's Stortford (see page 7)

From the Secretary

The Church Oversight Group (deacons and others) recently met to discuss communion. Hearing from other churches that have joined to form LEPs, communion often seems to be the one thing that causes division, although it should be the very thing that brings us all together. Our traditions have different ways of serving communion. The Methodist way is for those who are able, to go forward in groups of about 12 people to receive the bread and wine from the minister, eat and drink together, and then receive a blessing before returning to their seats. The URC way is for the congregation to stay in their seats and be served by the elders, who are then served by the minister, and then all eat and drink together. The Methodist service is quite formal, with congregational responses and prayers; sometimes the URC service includes something similar, although not identical.

There doesn't seem to be a satisfactory way of combining the two traditions, so it was agreed that we will alternate. According to our current agreement with Water Lane, the URC minister will take the service on the third Sunday of each month at Stansted. To enable us to alternate communion each month, we will have a URC communion one month on the third Sunday and a Methodist communion on the second Sunday of the next month. It really isn't as complicated as it sounds, just check Imagine each month. We shall have communion on Easter Sunday and other occasions as well. We will review the situation once Allen Morton has settled in, and he and David have had a chance to see how it works.

Just a reminder about the Church Meeting that was postponed and will now be held on February 26th at 8 pm in the hall.

I recently came across this little story. I should point out that I don't know the minister or the church member concerned!

A minister went out one Saturday to visit his church members. At one house, it was obvious that someone was at home, but nobody came to the door even though the minister knocked several times. Finally, the minister took out his visiting card and wrote 'Revelations 3:20' on the back and put it through the letter box. The next day, the card turned up in the collection plate, with the following added: 'Genesis 3:10'.

Happy Easter.

Betty

SHOE BOXES BREAK NEW GROUND IN LIBERIA



A team from the UK returned recently from Liberia after witnessing extraordinary scenes as shoe boxes were given out for the first time in Lofa County - an area in the north that was the scene of heavy fighting, rape and brutality during Liberia's long-running civil war. The children who received the shoe boxes couldn't believe that people in the UK would care to think of them and show practical love with these Christmas gifts. Having suffered the effects of war, poverty and disease, these children were given a powerful sense of self worth. For them, it meant the world that people they'd never met and living thousands of miles away had remembered them.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

In Voinjama, hundreds of school children queued in long lines in the heat from 7.30am (the start of the school day) until the team arrived at 10.30am. The excitement and anticipation shone from their faces. After one boy opened his box, he rushed up and shouted, "Thank you, thank you, thank you". Similar shouts were heard across the school as children held tightly to things they never dreamed of having for themselves. Many mothers were there to share the joy of the moment and take the boxes safely home.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

Jesus' command "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" couldn't be more explicit. We are to go out and carry out this great commission. It is amazing how often the church has actually resisted this task. For example, consider the withering rebuke delivered by a Baptist Council to young William Carey in 1786 when he told them about his desire to become a missionary: "Sit down, young man. When it pleases the Lord to convert the heathen He will do it without your help or mine". Where does the great commission figure on our agenda? At the top?

Alan Wheeler

Pilots

THE PEACE BOX REMINDER

At the end of this term the Pilots are going to open the Peace Boxes and read the messages, etc that have been posted therein. There are four boxes in various locations and these will be gathered together and read out at our last Pilot meeting this term on 17th March, and maybe also at a suitable service in the church.

PLEASE could you make sure that you post your messages, pictures, etc of "Peace" in our box which is situated in the foyer. It would be encouraging for the Pilots to know that members and friends of the church are thinking of the projects that they are involved in.

Valerie Trundle



Care Time



There have been several folk missing from our services recently including Phyllis Little who has been in hospital again, and Bessie Armitage who has gone to stay with her daughter in Scotland until she is feeling better. Janet spoke to Bessie recently and she sends her love to everyone. She is having lots of tests to find the problem but so far they have all proved negative. If anyone would care to drop Bessie a line she would be very pleased to hear from you at:

Please remember Phyllis and Bessie in your prayers; also Nancy Rawlings and her family following the death of Rev Ronald Rawlings; Rev Jim Gill who has been having chemotherapy; Arthur Law who is awaiting treatment, and others who are unwell.

Sponsor a Chair Update

A very big thank you to all who responded so generously - donations from church members, the Monday Club, Millways, and Shalom have covered the cost of 15 new chairs for the hall.

We have been given further donations and will be purchasing some more chairs so donations are still welcome. Thank you.

Marion Dyer & Alan Wheeler

Riding Lights 'Redemption Song'

The Charis Centre, B Stortford 8 pm Wed 19th March

A communal experience of theatre and worship, Redemption Song is a new play written by Les Ellison. The play starts & ends at the cross - that savage unlooked for place which more than any other reveals the true identity of Jesus Christ. As the drama unfolds, the song Christ sings rises above the various discordant reactions to his presence, whether from the strident strings of the Religious Tradition or the oppressive brass of the Army of Occupation. Full of vividly drawn characters from the gospels, Les Ellison's new play gives many illuminating insights which take us under the skin of the passion story. Whether poor or powerful, privileged or dispossessed, no one walks away untouched by an encounter within the one life which constantly provokes the question: "Who do you say I am?"



The script is divided into six episodes to create space for other expressions of worship, music & reflection arising directly out of the drama. The whole presentation becomes a powerful act of remembrance which is both participatory and reflective, shot through with moments of great joy and great conflict, robustly and compellingly performed. Redemption Song asks each of us to review our understanding of our own faith in the searing bright light of the crucifixion of Christ.

Riding Lights productions are always excellent. Tickets are £7.50, concessions £4 - advance booking recommended. Please contact me by 29th February if you are interested or you can telephone the box office ansaphone on 465520.

Marion Dyer

Stansted Free Church

Methodist / URC

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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