 imagine waiting with a crowd of football supporters to board the last carriage of a homeward train. A fellow holds back the crowd to let me on first.

Me "Thank you!"
He "Boy Scout!"
Me (joking) "Girl Guide" ...

.... remembering how I'd been propelled by a local vicar into leadership for Brownies, then later Ranger companies. The theme caught on like fire: our end of the carriage turned into a warm hearth - no football fury (they were West Ham, I was Arsenal) just happy banter about Cubs, Brown Owls, campfires and songs, half remembered non-truths about it all from us all. Passing Cheshunt gravel pit reservoirs I recalled canoe rolling with Rangers (surprise, surprise!). A young girl passed round sweets ...

Me "I hope you get them back!"
She "That's ok, we're all family here"

I felt my heart strangely warmed being included in our 'family' carriage. The gang left me at Harlow and as I remarked that I had got a walk at my end, the girl pressed the remaining sweets on me 'to keep me going'. That fellowship of the wine gums was to me a pre-communion, a sharing of next day's Easter love-feast celebrated so gladly with the Saints at Stansted (and Brenda's sharing those little Easter eggs with us all).

Phyllis Harrison

IMPORTANT NOTICE

During the week beginning Monday 30th April, work is being done on the organ blower in order to replace the asbestos lining. During this time there will be no admittance to the church building. Warning signs will be displayed by the contractors. The hall will not be affected.



Note: Asbestos is only dangerous when it is moved. If it is safely managed and contained, it does not present any health risk.

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The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Sunday 27th May. Please submit articles by 20th May. 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. 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

What's on in May

Sunday Worship at Stansted Free Church

6th	10.30 am	All Age Worship
	2.30 pm	Rev Trevor Sands
13th	10.30 am	Maureen Kendall
20th	10.30 am	Rev Keith Page - Holy Communion
27th	10.30 am	Rev Martin Cressey

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 6th	3.30 pm	Outreach tea in the Foyer
Mon 14th	6.00 pm	Pilots in the Hall
	8.00 pm	Shalom in the Hall - Stuart & Brenda Veitch Talk and slides of South Africa
Mon 21st	2.30 pm	Monday Club - Rev Murray George

Retrak (formerly Tigers Club)

On Sunday June 17th, Dave Mann and Karen Brown will be coming to Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church to talk about Retrak's work with street children in Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia.

John and Ruth Banks have been supporters of this charity for a number of years, and know of the marvellous work done amongst families ravaged by war, family breakdown, poverty, AIDS etc. The talk begins at 4.30 pm, followed by tea and cakes and an evening service at 6.30 pm.

We have been invited to attend and need to give numbers, so if you are interested please let Marion know.

For more details about Retrak please contact Ruth.

From the Church Oversight Group

What is it?

Some of you may be wondering what the Church Oversight Group is. Well, it comprises the six deacons, the joint treasurers, the secretary and the ministers. At the present time, the secretary and one of the treasurers also happen to be deacons, but this will not necessarily be the case in the future. We meet every four to six weeks to discuss any issues concerning the running of the church, finance, pastoral concerns, etc. If any major decisions need to be made, the Oversight Group will normally discuss them and then bring a proposal to the Church Meeting. The deacons represent the church members, and are elected at the Annual Church Meeting.

Easter Sunday 2007



Easter Sunday worship, led by Rev Stuart Veitch, was a very joyful celebration of the risen Christ.

Our worship was enhanced by the liturgical dance performed by Catherine Fox, with vocal accompaniment by her daughter Zara.

Church Newsletter

You may have noticed that there is no article entitled 'From the Minister' in this edition of *Imagine*. During the interregnum we shall not have a ministerial message every month, and we would very much like to have more general contributions from our congregation. Please see page 2 for details.

The Hunt Begins!

Where next?

When our constitution was drawn up, it was agreed that we would have two ministers - one Methodist and one United Reformed (URC). The appointment processes for ministers within these two traditions are different. Methodist ministers are appointed to a church for a fixed term, which can be extended, whereas URC ministers are appointed for an indefinite term. Following David's retirement, we are now beginning the process of seeking a new URC minister. We have already drawn up a 'profile' which tells a prospective minister where the church is on its 'spiritual journey', what our hopes and aspirations are for the future, and any particular qualities we would prefer a minister to have. In our case, the minister is shared with Bishop's Stortford URC, so we have to ensure that our two profiles are not wildly different; fortunately, they are not!

Once our two profiles have been approved by the 'higher authorities', they are sent to all URC ministers, who are then entitled to express an interest. At this point, their current congregations are usually unaware that their minister is thinking of moving; so we have appointed a vacancy committee to ensure that everything is kept confidential. It can be anything from six months to two years before a new minister is appointed, because all parties want to ensure that the 'right person' is appointed. For more about the process please see the Secretary's report on page 6.

Ministerial Support

During the interregnum, we have a URC interim moderator - who 'moderates' our church meetings, and leads some services - and we are delighted that Rev Janet Tollington has been appointed to us in this role. In addition, Rev Stuart Veitch, a supernumerary Methodist minister, who is a member of our congregation, will be assisting Keith Page with some aspects of pastoral ministry.

From the Secretary

At the special Church Meeting on Easter Sunday our representatives to the Joint Vacancy Committee were agreed as: Catherine Dean, Mike Dyer, Janet Townsend, Valerie Trundle and myself, with Marion Dyer as reserve. Our Draft Pastorate Profile was available after the service for anyone to read and make comments - all of which were favourable.

The Vacancy Committee meet on 1st & 22nd May, to compile a joint profile with Water Lane that will be sent to the Moderator ready for when the vacancy is declared at the June Synod. Once that has happened we sit back and wait patiently until the name of a prospective minister is put forward. Watch this space, but it may be some time. Until we have a name to bring to Church Meeting all discussions of the Vacancy Committee are confidential.

I have received the following:

Loosley Row
Princes Risborough

Dear Betty

I would be most grateful if you would convey to the church our deep gratitude and thanks for the most generous gifts that were presented to us on Sunday the 18th March. The memory of that day, and indeed of the 7½ years at Stansted, will live in our hearts. Thank you all, it has been an honour and privilege to be your minister.

We wish you all God's Blessings in the future as Stansted Free Church, and every best wish as you declare a vacancy and seek a new minister to lead you in the future that awaits you.

May God Bless you,
Love David and Sylvia.

Interestingly, when I typed 'May God bless you' my computer turned it into a question by adding a question mark! Of course we know differently - that it is a statement of fact, there is no question about it. Computers may be clever but they don't have all the answers!! Betty

Pilots

Our meetings for the rest of the Summer Term are from 6.00 - 7.30 on the following Mondays:

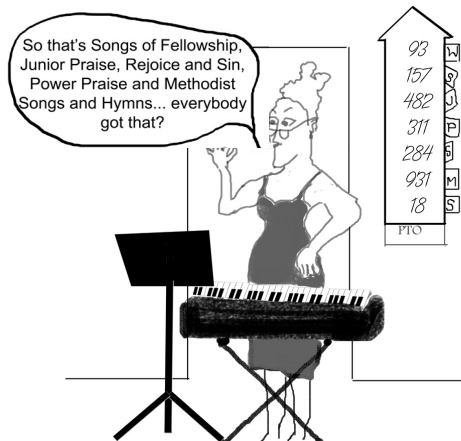
30th April 14th May 4th & 18th June 2nd & 16th July

Unfortunately we did not have any response to my appeal in last month's Imagine for more helpers. Please think seriously about this and whether you can help in any way. The situation is now getting quite serious and if we are to continue this valuable work with the children in our care, we really need more help in order to keep Pilots alive.

Valerie Trundle 813433

Worship Leaders Wanted

Within the membership of the church we are fortunate to have Mike Dyer as an accredited Methodist Local Preacher; but what some of you may not know is that Marion Dyer is a trained and accredited Methodist Worship Leader. This means that Marion is able to assist with any aspect of Sunday worship except the sermon, both in our church and any other Methodist Church. Within Methodism, Sunday services should have either a minister or accredited Local Preacher present, who takes responsibility for that service. This is not the case in the United Reformed Church, where each local church can approve a suitable person to lead worship.



Within Stansted Free Church, the Oversight Group would like others from our fellowship to lead worship; and whilst encouraging them to undertake formal training that is available from both denominations, this is not a pre-requirement. Therefore if you feel you would like to become involved in our Sunday services, or learn more about what is involved, please speak to Marion or one of the other deacons.

ChristianAid

We believe in life before death

An Eventful Week – 13th to 19th May

Joint Service

The week starts on Sunday 13th May at 6.30pm with Worship for Christian Aid at the Friends Meeting House. The Act of Worship booklet is written this year by John Bell of the Iona Community and draws inspiration from El Salvador and Archbishop Oscar Romero. Please do join us.

COFFEE MORNING

All proceeds to Christian Aid

10 am - noon Wed 16th May

Free Church Hall

Traidcraft ~ Fairtrade ~ Plants

Cakes ~ and other stalls

All welcome

Donations of cakes appreciated

House to House



All week volunteers will be doing a **House-to-house envelope collection** in Stansted. People are always very generous, but please don't forget that by signing the envelope as a taxpayer, Christian Aid can claim almost 30% more from the government.

Walk in the City

To end the week, why not take part in a 10km sponsored **Circle the City** walk on Sunday 20th May (or take a short cut to do 6km)? You will see the sights of the City of London and raise money for Christian Aid's water projects. Please contact me for details and sponsorship forms.

Catherine Dean

Christians and politics

On the occasion of local elections many of us may be asking questions such as:

- What is our Christian duty with regard to the State?
- Should Christians be 'good citizens'?
- Should the Church get involved in politics?
- Is it our duty to vote in elections, and should we make sure we are as informed as possible, so that we can vote responsibly?

Jesus told us to pray: 'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'. This surely implies that every Christian has a duty to make every effort to bring about God's kingdom here on earth; indeed, many go into politics for this reason. We should work to make God the ruler of every situation. Making an informed vote may therefore be part of our Christian duty. As a result of becoming informed, we may find ourselves in a position to become more actively involved in discussion, or protest, or in the media.



A helpful reference might be 1 Corinthians 12.4-31 (on the diversity of gifts). Some of us may indeed have gifts that equip us for a very active involvement in politics. Others may have gifts in other directions, which are just as important for building up the Kingdom of God on earth. We desperately need Christian people working among the poor, in social work, in business and in other unsavoury parts of our society. Whatever our gifts, we can pray for discernment; that if our political life seems to be in good hands, with many Christians at work there, we might look elsewhere, but that if we discern disturbing trends in politics, we may feel called to offer ourselves and our talents to God in that work.



Care Time



We ask you to remember our church family in your prayers:
It's lovely to have Mary Ecclestone back at church again - we're all glad to see you Mary. Unfortunately Dora, Ivor and Mary Heuch aren't able to get to church as often as they, and we, would like, so to them and anyone else who is not able to get out and about we do miss you and wish you well.

We send our condolences to Sandra and Helen Gould and their family on the death of Sandra's mother and Helen's grandmother, Betty Lambert. Mr and Mrs Lambert supported the church when we were actively fund-raising, attending concerts and other events. We also remember Cherry Lewis, one of our Pilots leaders, and Peter Thompson, husband of Rosemary, another of our Pilots leaders.

Financial Update

We thought this was a good time to give a financial update for the first seven months of our first year of being a joint church.

Income		Expenditure	
Offerings	6900	Ministerial expenses	6800
Tax refund	875	Insurance	1170
Lettings	2245	Donations	310
Interest	4560	Printing	74
Donations	3700	Repairs & maintenance	3700
		Cleaning	690
		Utilities	800
		Copyright	156
		Organ tuning	84
		Miscellaneous	100
Total	£18,280	Total	£13,884

Although this shows that we currently have a £4000 excess of income over expenditure, we do have some large expenses to come during the remainder of this year; the removal of the asbestos from the organ (£2000) and the replacement carpet in the hall (£3000). Our overall prediction for this year is that we will have deficit of around £4000.

The Treasurers

Monday Club

On April 16th Mrs Violet Ashford gave us a very interesting talk, illustrated by slides, on Lord Howe Island which is situated off the coast of Australia. The island is five miles long and two miles wide, but one is unable to walk right around it because of the mountains. No cats are allowed and only two dogs; the number of visitors each year is restricted. This is an island I had never heard of before.

Next month on May 21st our speaker will be Rev Murray George. Just to remind you that our meetings take place at 2.30 pm on the third Monday of each month. Everyone is welcome.

Future meetings:

18th June	Mrs Marion Johnson
16th July	Garden afternoon at Fermoy, High Lane
20th August	Mr Barry Kaufmann-Wright
17th September	Mr Peter Brown
19th November	Mr and Mrs Peter Trundle

Phyllis Little

The editors had not heard of Lord Howe Island either so we thought readers would be interested in a bit more of its history.....

On 17 February 1788 the convict ship HMS Supply was on its way from Botany Bay when it chanced upon a little island paradise in the Tasman Sea. The ancient civilisations of the South Pacific didn't seem to know it. There was no sign of man ever having been there. Remaining just a navy statistic for some time, the island acquired the name of the first sea Lord. Ever



Photo by Bert Van Den Berg

since the first population arrived fifty years later there have been fears for the precious species on the island. Amid the palm trees, mysterious glowing mushrooms can be picked. As the gentle breeze rustles the palm fronds, you might see on the bush tracks, covered with the fallen fronds, the rare Lord Howe Woodhen or the Lord Howe Currawong. Today the island is a World Heritage site.

Stansted Free Church
Methodist / URC
www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

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Pilots

Valerie Trundle
Email: pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

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.