

Imagine!



December
2015

Imagine what it is like being forced to leave your home. In truth, we don't need much imagination at present. We can see the pictures of the refugee camps all around the borders of Syria, and the migrants arriving in overcrowded boats on the shores of Mediterranean countries. We can see them moving across Europe. We know that our own community will be asked to receive Syrian refugees in the coming months and years. If we want to imagine what it is like being forced to leave your home, all we have to do is look at the despair on the faces of our contemporary refugees. I am glad and sad that we are giving our Christmas offerings to various appeals to help refugees, and that at our gift service we are collecting for the Whitechapel Mission to help the homeless in London.

Think of the Christmas story as it is imagined by both Luke and Matthew. Luke imagines Jesus' family uprooted from their home in Nazareth at the decree of the Roman Emperor to travel to Bethlehem, and when they arrive in Bethlehem, the only accommodation they can find for Jesus when he is born is a feeding box for animals. Imagine our contemporary refugees and then imagine the Christmas story again. Matthew imagines Jesus and his family uprooted because of the jealousy of a king and forced to flee into exile in Egypt. The holy family become refugees thrown upon the mercy of strangers in a foreign land. Imagine our contemporary refugees and then imagine the Christmas story again.

Why should we imagine the Christmas story in this way? It is because it saves our celebration of Christmas from becoming bland and comfortable; the Christmas story imagines the peace of God coming into the world through the vulnerable baby and living among the mess of the world and the disorder in our lives. Imagine God sharing our despair and trouble in the infant Christ; and in that moment of wonder, imagine the touch of healing for our wounds, a word of

forgiveness for the hurt we cause each other, and being embraced by consolation in our sorrow. Imagine despair turning to hope and sadness into joy; and then with open hearts welcome Christ again.

God bless you all this Christmas and into the New Year.



Care Time



We pray for Iris and Dave Evans on the death of Iris' Uncle Bill, for all those who are grieving at this time, and for those who will be spending their first Christmas alone, or without loved ones; for the Churches Together in Stansted Messy Church on 6th December; for Colin Finbow undergoing chemotherapy, and for others in our wider church family who need our prayers.

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The next edition of **Imagine** will be available on Christmas Day. Please submit articles by Friday 18th December to: news@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk. Alternatively, please pass to one of the editors, or send to: 23A Bentfield Road, Stansted CM24 8HP.

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 DECEMBER

Worship at Stansted Free Church

6th	10.30 am	Rev'd Charles Martin
13th	10.30 am	Carols & Gift Service (see below)
20th	10.30 am	Rev'd Roy Fowler - Communion
25th	10.30 am	Rev'd Roy Fowler - Christmas Day Family Service
27th	10.30 am	No service at our church - services on that day: <i>10.30 am S Walden URC or 10 am B Stortford Methodist Church</i>

Other Activities

Wed 2nd	8.00 pm	Circuit Meeting in the Hall
Sat 5th	6.30 pm	Carol Singing at the Christmas Market, Crafton Green
Sun 6th	3.30 pm	Messy Church at St Mary's School
Wed 9th	8.00 pm	LPWL Meeting in the Hall
Sun 13th	11.30 am	Fairtrade goods on sale after the service
Mon 14th	8.00 pm	Shalom Party at 7 Blythwood Gardens
Wed 16th	10.00 am	The Place on the Hill Christmas Event (see p 4)
Sat 19th	3.00 pm	Celebration of Christmas at St Theresa's Church
Tue 22nd &	6.30 pm	Carol Singing (see p 6)
Wed 23rd	6.30 pm	Carol Singing (see p 6)
Thu 24th	11.15 pm	Midnight Communion at B S Methodist Church

Carols and Gift Service 13th December

Betty is arranging our carol service and would like suggestions of carols and readings to be included - please let her know by 6th December.

We will be collecting items for the Whitechapel Mission, which provides thousands of breakfasts to homeless people each year, and has the largest clothing store in London for the homeless. Items urgently needed are:

Food: tinned tomatoes, baked beans, hot chocolate, sugar, coffee, honey

Toiletries: toothbrushes, razors, shampoo, deodorant, soap

Clothes etc: men's underwear, socks, trainers and shoes, jeans waist 28-36", rucksacks, towels

If you are not able to be at the service, donations may be left in the vestry, but please label for Whitechapel. Thank you.

Christmas Day Service

Our offering on Christmas Day will be for the **Refugee Appeal**



STANSTED CHRISTMAS MESSY CHURCH



Sunday 6th December 3.30 - 5 pm
St Mary's School, Foresthall Park

An **exciting** and **informal** style of church for families, with activities, celebration and food (all based on a Christian theme), and an emphasis on **FUN!** Arranged by Churches Together in Stansted, our church has been very involved in the planning. We are looking for people to help with the activities on the day (please contact Marion), and to provide sandwiches and cakes (please contact Carol). For general information please contact Marion & Mike.



FOODBANK

The foodbank is well stocked and does not require any items at the present time. Thank you to all those who have donated.

Catherine

Welcome to
The



Christmas Event
Wednesday 16th December.
10 am - 11.30 am

Come and join the fun making Christingles followed by a visit from Father Christmas

All Welcome - do come along even if you do not normally attend The Place

The Place is open Wednesdays & Fridays 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
but we will be closed on Fridays 25th December & 1st January

For more details contact Marion & Mike
email: theplace@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

facebook The Place on the Hill
twitter @placeonthehill



www.stanstedchurches.com



CAROL SINGING

in aid of
Red Cross Europe Refugee Appeal

*ALL WELCOME
MEET AT 6.30 EACH EVENING*

*Come & join the fun singing your
favourite carols in Stansted*

Collectors also needed each night

Saturday Meet at the Christmas Market in Crafton
5th December Green to sing to the shoppers

Tuesday Meet on Bentfield Green
22 December Finish at Rainsford Road

Wednesday Meet junction Newell Rd/Felstead Cresc
23 December Finish at Newell Road



*Followed by seasonal refreshments
around 8 pm on Tues & Wed*





Celebration of Christmas Carols and Readings

with contributions from villagers,
local schools & churches

3 pm Saturday 19th December
St Theresa's Church, High Lane

Followed by mulled wine & soft drinks

*All are welcome to join the choir
- come along and have some fun!*

Choir Rehearsals in St Theresa's Church
7.30 - 8.45 pm Thur 3rd & 10th Dec
1.30 pm Sat 19th Dec

Collection for Red Cross Europe Refugee Appeal

Organised by Churches Together in Stansted
www.stanstedchurches.com

EXCHANGE

A new ministry based at **Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church** - for people to pass on things they don't need to people who do. In Bishop's Stortford there is a need for good quality children's clothing, toys and household goods for those with limited incomes. Tents and sleeping bags are needed for the homeless. Many of us also have things at home we never use, but someone else might treasure. They need babies', children's and young people's clothes, toys, games and children's books. In addition to passing on items free of charge, *Exchange* will also provide a warm welcome and a hot drink, and ask if they can help in any other ways. It is open on **Tuesdays 1.30 - 3.30 pm**. If you have items to donate, please take them to the Exchange room at the Baptist Church during these times, or contact Julia Horner on 07955 140293. Please do not leave donated items outside the gates or in the main church building. Any items donated which are not passed on within a reasonable time may be taken to local charity shops.

Prayer Requests



www.eastherthsymca.com

Please pray for:

- the vulnerable young people struggling with mental health issues, especially depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and self-harm, that they may find relief, peace, hope, and healing
- as we approach the Christmas season, those who are homeless and have little or no family support may find safety and security and a sense of belonging;
- two young people with very high-risk profiles - one who has been with us 11 months and the other who has been with us for 8 weeks - that they may continue to find stability and motivation so that they can begin to heal and move on in their life journey
- our healthy eating cooking course, that residents will attend and learn valuable skills that will serve them when they successfully move-on into the community

Thank you all for your prayer support which is so valuable to us and a real source of encouragement. For further information please tel 01279 838068 or email: robert.purcell@eastherthsymca.com

Stansted Free Church (Methodist / URC)

www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Part of the WEBS (West Essex & Bishop's Stortford) URC Pastorate
and the Bishop's Stortford Methodist Circuit

Contacts

Minister

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Fairtrade

Brenda Veitch

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Sunday Service

10.30 am Morning Worship.

1st Sunday of each month - New Directions (Informal)

The Place on the Hill Drop-In (Everyone Welcome)

Every Wednesday and Friday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

Tel Marion & Mike, Catherine & Alan or Fran

Email: theplace@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk