

Imagine!



NOV
2016

I imagine you do not know who you are. Unfortunately, for people with advanced dementia that is all too real. Several years ago John Powell wrote *"Why am I afraid to tell you who I am?"* and the devastating answer followed: *"Because it is all I have..."* Powell thinks people adopt roles and play psychological games to protect their inner selves. In fact who we really are is perhaps even a mystery to ourselves. Sometimes we seem to be more than one person, and change according to who we are with and the place we are in. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was aware of this shifting world of public personas even as the gallows loomed. His haunting last poem is entitled *Who am I?* As he moves about his prison, he is aware that others see him as someone he does not actually recognise as himself. The authentic Dietrich only emerges when he faces his God in prayer.

Jesus said "Who do men say I am?" and then "Who do **you** say I am?" Powell considers the consequences that our real self faces if no one else ever finds out what we are like. Jesus knew it was important that the disciples knew **exactly** what he was like, because they would need to declare his identity to others, including future generations. I think to some extent, the more we discover our identity, the more we understand *Who He is*.

So *Who are you?* and will you meet God as the *you* that you really are? Maybe who we really are is only known to God. We have to trust him to keep our identity precious and safe as we face difficult changes in our lives. Bonhoeffer ends the poem with the line

Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!

The full poem is printed overleaf

Alan Wheeler

WHO AM I? by Deitrich Bonhoeffer

Who am I?

They often tell me I stepped from my cell's confinement
Calmly, cheerfully, firmly, like a Squire from his country house.

Who am I?

They often tell me I used to speak to my warders
Freely and friendly and clearly, as though it were mine to command.

Who am I?

They also tell me I bore the days of misfortune
Equably, smilingly, proudly, like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really that which other men tell of?

Or am I only what I myself know of myself?

Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
Struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat,
Yearning for colours, for flowers, for the voices of birds,
Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighbourliness,
Tossing in expectations of great events,
Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
Faint, and ready to say farewell to it all.

Who am I? This or the Other?

Am I one person today and tomorrow another?

Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,

And before myself a contemptible woebegone weakling?

Or is something within me still like a beaten army

Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.

Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!

Bonhoeffer was hanged in the concentration camp at Flossenburg on 9th April 1945



Care Time



We pray for: Howard; Arthur and Desiree recovering from hip operations; Alexis, as she is received into church membership; visitors to *The Place* who are unwell or going through difficult times; and those undergoing tests or awaiting operations.

The next edition of *Imagine* will be available on Sunday 27th November. Please email articles by Friday 18th November to news@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk or pass to one of the editors: Alan and Mike & Marion

**Copies of this and previous editions of *Imagine* can be found on our website
www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk**

WHAT'S ON IN NOVEMBER

Worship at Stansted Free Church

6th 10.30 pm The Worship team - New Directions One World

13th 10.50 am Rev'd Roy Fowler at the War Memorial (*Remembrance*)

No morning service at our church

20th 10.30 am Maureen Kendall

25th 10.30 am Rev'd Roy Fowler - Communion & Reception of New member

Other Activities

Sun 6th 11.30 am Fairtrade goods on sale after the service

Wed 9th 7.00 pm Shoe Box Packing at St Theresa's Parish Centre

Wed 23rd 2.30 pm Bible Study in the Foyer

CELEBRATION LUNCH

Our service on Sunday 25th November includes the reception of Alexandra Darkmin into church membership. Alexis and Julie would like to invite everyone to a bring and share Celebration Lunch in the Hall starting at 12 noon on that day.

10th CHURCH ANNIVERSARY 4th September



It was lovely to have a full church when we celebrated 10 years since Stansted URC and Stansted Methodist Church joined to form Stansted Free



Church. Rev'd David Simpson, our URC minister at that time, reminded us of the steps we had taken during the two years prior to coming together in September 2006, and outlined some of the major events that have taken place since then.



We were delighted to see David and his wife Sylvia and catch up on all their news.



They are now retired and live in Norfolk (Betty has contact details).

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

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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 Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
Tel Marion & Mike, Catherine & Alan or Fran
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