

Imagine!



Imagine not
recognising
the gardener!

Imagination is a wonderful thing. It is a gift that enables us to make sense of our world not only by the use of our reason or through our emotional faculties, but by our ability to think and indeed feel 'outside the box', beyond the constraints of reason or emotion. Imagination is a creative gift. It enables the composer to hear a tune even before it is played, the writer to conceive a tale even before it is told, the inventor to embrace a possibility even before it has been considered, and the scientist to pose an answer to a complex problem ahead of its confirmation by experimentation. It is to our imaginations that so many appeals are made. Advertising is a good example. We are invited to imagine what this or that might do to improve and enhance our lives. Indeed, we spend much of our time imagining and re-imagining our lives as we seek a better future for ourselves.

Jesus of Nazareth appealed to the imaginations of his contemporaries when he invited them to see God's kingdom dawning, and God's new future being realised. For a time, wherever Jesus went, that future could be glimpsed as people experienced forgiveness, healing, and new beginnings in their encounters with him. But even imagination has its limits. When Jesus was arrested, summarily tried and executed the imagined future of which he spoke suddenly melted away as if it were no more than a pleasant dream from which one wakes to the cold realities of life. When Jesus died, the imaginations of his followers died too - they fled and hid away for fear that they would be next to die, and despair and grief overwhelmed them. It's not hard to imagine how they must have felt!

John goes on to tell us that on the first day of the week after Jesus was crucified, Mary was at the garden tomb - weeping!

Not only was she grieving because of the trauma of Jesus' death two days earlier, but she was now distressed because the tomb had been disturbed and Jesus' body had gone missing. All she could think was "They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him" (John 20: 13). Turning to a nearby stranger, whom she imagined to be the gardener, she asked if he knew anything about it. And then came a moment of amazed astonishment. The stranger spoke her name in a voice that she knew so well. And through the tears that clouded her eyes, she saw standing before her none other than Jesus himself. It was not possible, but there he was. There were no words that she could draw on to describe her experience - all she knew was that Jesus was dead no longer. He was alive. She ran to tell the others, "I have seen the Lord!"

This was no figment of her imagination. Soon the other disciples encountered the risen Jesus and knew for themselves that the crucified Jesus had been raised by God. The promised future that Jesus had led them to imagine, had not disintegrated in Jesus' death, quite the contrary, in fact. Jesus' death confirmed that new future. And no longer was it a future that must be imagined, but it had become a present reality in their lives. So St Paul wrote, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). A new world had indeed dawned and it was a world inhabited by the risen Christ to whom they now witnessed and whose company would always be with them.

God's new future is here - it is a future characterised by the love that gives all for us and our muddled world, and never gives up on us but patiently invites us to step into it and be part of it by following, serving and loving this Jesus. It is not an imaginary world, but the real world, carved out of suffering and characterised by unquenchable love. We imagine that our 'old world' is all there is. Easter offers us the real world, God's world. Just let your imagination loose for a while so that you might see it, experience it and live it.

Happy Easter!

David



Care Time



Please remember in your prayers: Allen and Daphne Morton's daughter Elaine, undergoing chemotherapy; Phyllis Little in hospital with a dislocated shoulder; Valerie's brother Charles, with heart problems; Judy's brother-in-law, with Alzheimer's, and his family; and all those who are not able to attend church.

Please also remember that the prayer slips are available for Sunday morning worship and if you are unable to be at church, please pass your requests to Marion Pretty or me and we will make sure the preacher for that Sunday knows.

Betty

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The next edition of *Imagine* will be available on Sunday 25th April. Please submit articles by Friday 16th April 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

Pilots

FURY Assembly

In January this year, I attended FURY Assembly as a representative from Eastern Synod. The weekend was absolutely amazing; to have so many young people all coming together to worship God is just incredible. I got to join in workshops, meet new people, talk about my faith, reminisce with friends, but most important of all, I got to worship God in many different ways. There were many workshops to take part in, including Iona singing and godly play. On the Saturday evening, everybody performed traditional stories, with their own take on them! This gave people a chance to make new friends, in the groups they were put in. We stayed up until the early hours of the morning, making new friends, talking about the events of that day, and having fun! That's what FURY Assembly is about, worshipping God, sharing your faith with others, meeting new people and having fun!

Lyndsay Barns

Creative Evening at Pilots

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) has been our theme for this term and on 8th March the Pilots put on their 'aprons' (after some persuasion from Betty) and proceeded to make a



Madagascan village out of boxes of various shapes and sizes. They used crayons and paints to make the houses look colourful, scissors to cut the cardboard and glue to stick it all together.

Peter had brought along a demonstration house (one that he had made earlier) and Arthur had drawn various trees and plants that are grown in the area.

You can see the results on top of the long cupboard in the Hall.



During the term we have learnt about the vital work undertaken by MAF and how their small planes go into inaccessible parts of the world taking missionaries, doctors, nurses, engineers and medical supplies in order to show the love of God to the people of these regions. Look out in next month's Imagine for a report on our MAF evening on 22nd March and the MAF Sunday service on 28th March. Pilots begins again after the Easter break at 6 pm on Monday 26th April.

Valerie Trundle

My Day at Synod

On 20th March, Valerie and I joined many others at Water Lane URC in Bishop's Stortford, for the Synod meeting. We spent the day listening to talks and reports by various Revds. The day began on a more business level with apologies and such, before moving into the reports. We heard a very inspirational talk from the Revd Roberta Rominger, the General Secretary of the URC. She talked about URC initiatives in the wider picture, where she told us about 'vision 4 life', which is a process to transform the United Reformed Church. We also heard from Revds James Langstaff and Peter Ball who both provided us with talks and discussions that I know I learnt a lot from. To close the day, we met with a number of young children who had been spending the day thinking about the things that make them want and not want to attend church. They did a presentation, and joined us in worship. I enjoyed the day, and met some very inspirational people.

Lyndsay Barns

What's on in April

Worship at Stansted Free Church

2nd 10.30 am Rev David Mullins - Good Friday
4th 10.30 am Rev Allen Morton - Easter Day Communion
11th 10.30 am Rev Claire Heald
18th 10.30 am Ken Mark
25th 10.30 am Denis Walker
6.30 pm Circuit Easter Offering Service

Other Activities

Sat 10th 7.30 pm Organ recital in the Church
Sun 11th 11.30 am Fairtrade goods on sale after service
Tue 20th 8.00 pm Churches Together Forum in the Hall
Mon 26th 6.00 pm Pilots in the Hall
Sun 18th 7.00 pm Cafe Worship
Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church

Other Easter Services

Maundy Thursday 1st April

8 pm Bishop's Stortford Methodist Church Tenebrae Service
7.30 pm Bishop's Stortford URC Church Tenebrae Service and light supper

Good Friday 2nd April

Stansted Walk of Witness 4.15 pm from St Teresa's to St John's

STANSTED FREE CHURCH
ORGAN RECITAL
Sat 10th April 7.30 pm
Organist Brian Heald
(son-in-law of Phyllis Harrison)
with Claire Heald (Contralto)

Programme includes Bach's Toccata in D minor and Widor's Toccata (5th Symphony), music by Albinoni and Vaughan-Williams, plus transcriptions of well known folk songs and music by Grieg, Gershwin and others.

Entry by ticket only (£5) from
betty@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk
Proceeds to Methodist Homes

Brian has been organist at Wesley Methodist Church, Chester since 1976 and is accompanist for The Vale Royal Singers. He gives regular recitals on both piano and organ in Chester, accompanies Claire and performs in a duo with Chester cellist Lionel Clarke and with trumpeter John Bush.

Claire (née Harrison) has performed as a soloist in Chester and the surrounding area on many occasions, usually accompanied by Brian. Claire is a Methodist Minister in the Chester Circuit.

Stansted Free Church

Methodist / URC

www.stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

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Sunday Service

10.30 am Morning Worship

New Directions - our bi-monthly service in a less formal style

Children's Work

Alternate Mondays 6 pm Pilots for children aged 5 - 18 years.

Valerie Trundle Email: pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk