

Imagine!

March
2012



Imagine a whole congregation emerging from church with dirty hair! That's how it used to be in the early days when you underwent the 'Ash Wednesday experience'. Apparently women were lucky as they only had the sign of the cross marked with ash on their brows. Men had to undergo the whole ash dowsing! Although 'Ash Wednesday' is not mentioned in the Bible the custom goes back to the eighth century at least. The earliest mention of it in England was in the writings of the Anglo-Saxon abbot Aelfric. The Bible does however mention sackcloth and ashes many times with the most recent of them being Jesus's comment about the likely reaction of Tyre and Sidon to his miracles if they had seen them performed ahead of Korazin and Bethsaida! Sackcloth and ashes appear all over the Old Testament. Tamar reacts to her rape with sackcloth and ashes; Mordecai takes them on when faced with the royal edict of destruction of the Jewish nation. It is interesting to see their use connected with acts of injustice such as the attack on Tamar and the oppression of a minority in Esther ch 4.

But of course, primarily sackcloth and ashes are connected with repentance. Having converted to Christianity, T. S. Eliot penned his famous poem *Ash Wednesday* with the lines "Because I do not hope to turn again" reminding us of the ease with which we can slip back into our old ways before repentance. Eliot hopes that once having turned away from his sinful nature, he does not fail and turn back again. It reminds us of Jesus's words "No one, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." As we enter Lent let us remember the one who, well aware of our weakness, took our sins upon himself. Lent is a time of remembering that 'Love Divine' which we summon to come down, and which is so wonderful and inviting that we willingly let "earthly passions turn into dust and ashes in its heat consuming".

Alan Wheeler



Care Time



Please pray for the family of Brenda Scarr, who died recently.

We also remember Doris Lambdon, mother-in-law of Alan Wheeler, undergoing chemotherapy; John Dyer, who has been unwell for several months; others in our wider church family who need our prayers, and those no longer able to attend church.

Please also remember the prayer slips which are available in the foyer for those to be remembered during our Sunday worship.

Betty

| In this issue: | Page |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Services and Events | 3 |
| Mission Shaped Intro | 4-5 |
| Women's World Day of Prayer | 6 |
| Pilots | 7 |
| Ministerial Update | 7 |
| Shalom | 7 |
| Contacts and regular events | Back cover |

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

Worship at Stansted Free Church

4th 10.30 am Don McGregor - New Directions
11th 10.30 am Mike Dyer **Please note change from the plan**
18th 10.30 am Rev'd David Keeble - Holy Communion
25th 10.30 am Janet Bottoms

**Services are now being held in the church
Morning worship is followed by coffee. All are welcome.**

Other Activities

| | | |
|----------|----------|---|
| Thu 1st | 8.00 pm | Local Preachers & Worship Leaders in the Hall |
| Fri 2nd | 2.00 pm | Women's World Day of Prayer in the Church |
| Sun 4th | 11.30 am | Fairtrade goods on sale after service |
| Mon 5th | 6.00 pm | Pilots in the Hall |
| Wed 7th | 7.45 pm | Mission Shaped Intro in the Hall |
| Mon 12th | 8.00 pm | Shalom discussion - 7 Blythwood Gardens |
| Wed 14th | 7.45 pm | Mission Shaped Intro in the Hall |
| Mon 19th | 6.00 pm | Pilots in the Hall |
| | 8.00 pm | Circuit Meeting in the Hall |
| Wed 21st | 7.45 pm | Mission Shaped Intro in the Hall |
| Mon 26th | 8.00 pm | Shalom at Home - 49 Recreation Ground |
| Wed 28th | 7.45 pm | Mission Shaped Intro in the Hall |

Mission Shaped Intro

Wednesdays 7.45 - 9.45 pm - **note change of time**

7th March Changing world, changing church
14th March Re-imagining church - community
21st March Re-imagining church - worship
28th March Re-imagining church - leadership and discipleship

**It is not essential to attend every session - come when you can
All welcome - see you there!**



Mission Shaped Intro

New world, new church? Our world and our lives have changed radically in the last twenty years, but has the church adapted to this change? Do we need a changed church for a changing world? Are new forms of church really possible? If so, how can they be developed? *Mission shaped intro* explores the 'why' of creating fresh expressions of church rather than the 'how'. The six-week course takes you on a journey looking at the ever-changing nature of our social communities and explores why the church needs to rethink its approach to those communities in meaningful and relevant ways. The sessions are delivered through presentation, movie clips and stories with active group participation. The course is part of *Fresh Expressions*, which encourages and resources new ways of being church. This six-week course is not designed to give clear cut answers or to arrive at any definite outcomes but rather to draw a response from participants that will lead to action on their part. The Fresh Expressions ethos is not to have all the answers and to learn from what God is doing around us and join in with Him. The format of the 6th session (Where do we go from here?) is still to be decided.

The sessions will be held in our hall on the following Wednesdays from 7.45 - 9.45 pm, led jointly by Revs David Keeble and Paul Wilkin:

29th February

1. Rediscovering mission and what that means for church

The mission of God as the foundation for any expression of church.

- 1 Introducing Mission-shaped Church:
 - About the report;
 - Stories of fresh expressions.
- 2 Our changing world:
 - How our world is constantly changing and our response to this;
 - A mixed economy for a changing world.
- 3 What does a mission-shaped church look like?
 - What is mission?
 - Five marks of mission.

7th March 2. Changing world, changing church

Explore how the rise of both consumerism and networking have affected our culture and how the church might respond.

- 1 Thinking about culture and consumerism
 - What is culture?
 - Culture - friend or foe?
- 2 Thinking about networks
 - Introduction to networks;
 - Identifying networks we belong to;
 - Our response.

14th March 3. Re-imagining church - community

Explore the need for fresh expressions of church to be community-focussed.

- 1 Who do we exist for?
 - The focus of society on self-centred spirituality;
 - What kind of community do we belong to?
 - Community within the church;
 - Open to community around us.

21st March 4. Re-imagining church - worship

Explore how fresh expressions of church are re-imagining worship.

- 1 What is worship?
 - Exploring different facets of worship;
 - Creative worship;
 - How do we change worship?

28th March 5. Re-imagining church - leadership and discipleship

Explore the type of leadership needed in fresh expressions of church and how to facilitate discipleship.

- 1 Valuing creativity
 - Made in the image of God;
 - Leadership;
 - What does leadership look like in a FE of church?
 - Exploring leadership models.
- 2 Discipleship
 - Definition of discipleship;
 - Developing discipleship in fresh expressions.



WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

(International and Interdenominational)

LET JUSTICE PREVAIL



2 pm Friday 2nd March Stansted Free Church

Speaker Christine Heyhoe

On Friday 2nd March over 3 million people world-wide will be praying and worshipping together using a form of service prepared by Christian women in Malaysia, beginning in Tonga and continuing around the world until the final service takes place 35 hours later in neighbouring Western Samoa. By then the day will have been celebrated in over 170 countries and more than 6,000 services will have been held in the British Isles alone.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, which has attracted migrants from other parts of Asia and beyond and is now one of the wealthiest and most developed countries in South East Asia. Women have made important contributions to its social and economic development but still face discrimination and violence at all levels of society. Even today a girl is seen as less valuable than a boy. Malaysia is now the most popular destination in Asia for migrant workers, and human trafficking has become a sophisticated and organised operation. Although Malaysia's multi-ethnicity has added to the rich heritage of its land and people, it has also given rise to many problems. In the service, those issues of concern are voiced. Justice for all is their hope, and their prayer is "Let Justice Prevail".

Although organised and led by women, this is essentially a day of prayer for everybody, as we demonstrate our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in other countries; all are welcome to attend. Further information can be found on the WWDP website at www.wwdp-natcomm.org.

Come and join Stansted's celebration at 2 pm in Stansted Free Church.

All welcome - men and woman! Please contact me for more details.

Brenda Veitch

Pilots

Remaining dates for this term on Mondays at 6pm:
5th & 19th March, 2nd April (to be confirmed as this is during the
Easter Holidays). Our theme is The Olympic Games.

With the help of Juliet Richards we are hoping to take part in the
village Good Friday project.

In June, as a contribution to the Queen's Jubilee Celebrations, we
hope to put together a small exhibition of photographs, showing
Pilot activities over the last few years.

Valerie Trundle

Ministerial Update

Our profile, which summarises where we are as a church and what
sort of URC minister we are seeking, was approved at the church
meeting in February. As the appointment is shared with Water Lane
URC, Bishop's Stortford, they have also drawn up their own profile.
Both churches are now working on a joint 'short profile' which will
be circulated to all URC ministers. A joint vacancy committee, with
representatives from both churches, has been set up to consider
applications from potential ministers. The process of finding a new
minister can take up to two years. We will keep you regularly
updated as to progress but certain matters discussed at the
committee will need to be kept confidential to protect any potential
candidate. Please pray that the right person will be led to us.



Shalom

All Welcome - Meetings are 8 pm

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 12th Mar | Tape and discussion about Melvin Bragg's views on Christianity - 7 Blythwood Gardens |
| 26th Mar | At Home - 49 Recreation Ground |

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

Contacts

Minister

Rev David Keeble

Email: minister@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Church Secretary

Betty Francis

Email: info@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Church Notices

Marion Pretty

Lettings

Mike & Marion Dyer

Email: lettings@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Newsletter Editors

Alan Wheeler Mike & Marion Dyer

Email: news@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Treasurers

Alan Wheeler Marion Dyer

Email: treasurer@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Fairtrade

Brenda Veitch

Email: fairtrade@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk

Sunday Service

10.30 am Morning Worship

Children's Work

Alternate Mondays 6 pm Pilots for children aged 5 - 18 years.
Valerie Trundle Tel 813433 Email: pilots@stanstedfreechurch.org.uk