

Penge Congregational Church



*You are the body of Christ!
Each one of you is a part of it.*

August 2020

An initiative of Hope Together

We are asked to pray where we are, that God will give us opportunities to witness to Christ, at 8.20pm (20.20 hours) on the 20th of each month, for 20 minutes.

The Prayer for Thursday 20th August:

Read John 17: 20, "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony."

And pray:

Living Lord Jesus, thank you for the initiatives run by Christians from different denominations. May the impact of us all working together in unity continue through churches in every community so that many people will put their trust in Jesus Christ.



*Pray ... that God
will give many
opportunities to
speak about Christ.*

Colossians 4:3



From the Minister

We don't usually publish a Newsletter in August, but in this weirdest of years we are trying to enable people to worship on a number of fronts, and some are still reliant on the readings we put in here.

All the way through this time, from the first week of lockdown, we have "met" three times a week on Zoom and discussed our faith, based on a passage of Scripture chosen by one of us. It is such a shame that more people haven't joined in these discussions because they have been so fruitful. Perhaps because we are in our own homes and feel safe and less exposed, we have been able to talk from our own experience and our own feelings far more than we would normally do in a conventional Bible study. And as a result we have learned such a lot, not just about each other's faith, but about our own.

There have been two "golden threads" running through 5 months of tri-weekly discussions: the first one is persistence in prayer. We don't ask God for enough and we don't keep on asking, seeking and knocking.

The second one is being joyful in the Lord. Perhaps because this has also been a time of reflection for churches, a time of re-evaluating the way we worship, we have talked a great deal about attitudes to worship. The traditional British belief is that worship should be reverent, solemn, pious, devout. Unfortunately, the secular perception of that equals "dull!"

Traditional British Christians look upon the Pentecostal churches, with their lively, often noisy, worship, with something approaching horror. And yet these people are just expressing the joy in their hearts because they belong to the Lord! What after all are you expressing when you sit quietly with your hands in your lap and your head bowed? You could be nodding off! Why do we look with suspicion on Christians

who are so bubbling over with the joy of the Spirit within them that they jump around and wave their arms?

When David, identified by God as “a man after God’s own heart”, brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, he was so full of joy that he danced before the Lord with all his might; he leapt and danced and shouted with joy. When he got home, his wife Michal (not the most successful of his many marriages!) sneered at him for being vulgar and shameless. And David retorted, “I was dancing before the Lord... he appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the Lord, so I celebrate before the Lord. Yes and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes.”

Just look through the psalms and especially at the ones that refer to praise- music and dance are a praise offering. In Jeremiah 30, the Lord says, “there will be joy and songs of thanksgiving, and I will multiply my people, not diminish them, I will honour them, not despise them.” Paul tells the Ephesian church, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit singing psalms and hymns among yourselves and making music to the Lord in your hearts.”

God welcomes exuberance in worship. He welcomes it when we express our joy and delight in him, when we worship and praise him.

We’re probably never going to be uninhibited enough to dance in the aisle and wave our arms around. But let’s not look down our noses at those who are!

Pam

On Friday 7th August at 7pm, we invite you to a Zoom church social! An opportunity to get together virtually and catch up, although you’ll have to bring your own tea and cake! The easiest way, if you haven’t used Zoom before is to Google Zoom, and opt to Join a Meeting.

Zoom ID 597 482 5851. Password 304 428

From Ian Grey, Sunday 5th July

Greetings everyone.

Sorry not to be able to join you all this special Sunday.

Just to say how great is our God!

Please continue to pray for me.

My theme has been 1 Kings 19: 4-5 throughout this troubled time and I thank God for hearing me.

Please continue to pray for me and my family.

Regards and blessings to everyone at PCC. God bless you all,

Ian

[1 Kings 19:4-5 New Living Translation (NLT)

⁴ Then he went on alone into the wilderness, travelling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."

⁵ Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!"]

World Vision Child Sponsorship

For many years now, we have sponsored a child through World Vision, and for most of the time, our children have lived in Kenya on World Vision's Nyatike Development Programme. For seven years, our child has been a young girl called Levine. Now we have had news from World Vision that is both happy and sad.

The sad news: after 26 years working in the area, World Vision is pulling out of Nyatike at the end of September.

The happy news: the reason is that Nyatike is now a flourishing community and is ready to be self-sufficient!

In the last 26 years, families in Nyatike have learned new ways of farming and how to eat a balanced diet so that their children now grow up healthy and strong. Children have clean water and safe toilets nearby their homes so that they're free from illnesses. Before, children were often kept away from school in order to spend the time fetching water. Now 100% of children in Nyatike are moving from primary to secondary education whereas in 2004 that figure was just 24%.

This shows us that our child sponsorship hasn't just been about charity. We have been helping to build a community that is now able to look after itself and flourish.

Now World Vision are asking us to sponsor a child living in a community they have just started to work with, in Pheone, Mozambique. The aim is for this to be a ten year project so that, in 2030, that community too will be ready for self-sufficiency. They ask us to sponsor a young girl called Albertina Pedrito. Her birthday is 27th June. She lives with her father and mother, her brother and two sisters. Both parents are in employment. She goes to primary school where her favourite subject is colouring! At home she helps out in the kitchen, and in her free time loves playing with dolls. Our sponsorship will enable Albertina to learn about her rights and the rest of the community will learn how to protect children from issues such as lack of birth registration, child marriage and other forms of abuse. More generally, the work of World Vision will provide children with quality education, clean water and healthcare. Our money doesn't go directly to Albertina and her family: it is used for the whole community, to give them

clean water, nutritious food, healthcare, education and a way to earn a living.

Please pray for the work of World Vision: give thanks for the fulfilment of their efforts in Nyatike; and ask God to be with them as they start their work with the people of Pheone. And pray particularly for Albertina and her family.

August Worship theme

[The reading for 2nd August can be found in the July magazine]

During August, we continue to worship in church and through our weekly podcast on the church website: www.pccweb.co.uk

For those still not able or comfortable attending church and who don't have internet access, our theme is Strangers and foreigners.

St Paul tells us in Galatians that "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus." Yet so many in our world are mistrustful, and worse, of people whom they perceive as different from themselves. This is not how God wants us to be. So we are looking at some of the key passages in the Bible which tell us how God does want us to treat strangers and foreigners.

Sunday 9th August. Deuteronomy 10: 12-22 (NLT)

¹² "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? He requires only that you fear the Lord your God, and live in a way that pleases him, and love him and serve him with all your heart and soul. ¹³ And you must always obey the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good. ¹⁴ "Look, the highest heavens and the earth and

everything in it all belong to the Lord your God. ¹⁵ Yet the Lord chose your ancestors as the objects of his love. And he chose you, their descendants, above all other nations, as is evident today. ¹⁶ Therefore, change your hearts^[a] and stop being stubborn. ¹⁷ “For the Lord your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords. He is the great God, the mighty and awesome God, who shows no partiality and cannot be bribed. ¹⁸ He ensures that orphans and widows receive justice. He shows love to the foreigners living among you and gives them food and clothing. ¹⁹ So you, too, must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. ²⁰ You must fear the Lord your God and worship him and cling to him. Your oaths must be in his name alone. ²¹ He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise, the one who has done these mighty miracles that you have seen with your own eyes. ²² When your ancestors went down into Egypt, there were only seventy of them. But now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky!

Reflect: God reminds the Israelites that they were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. Have you ever been in a situation where you have felt yourself to be alien? How did it make you feel?

Sunday 16th August. Ruth 2: 1-12 (NLT)

2 Now there was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi’s husband, Elimelech. ² One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go out into the harvest fields to pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it.” Naomi replied, “All right, my daughter, go ahead.” ³ So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech. ⁴ While she was there, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters.

"The Lord be with you!" he said. "The Lord bless you!" the harvesters replied. ⁵ Then Boaz asked his foreman, "Who is that young woman over there? Who does she belong to?" ⁶ And the foreman replied, "She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. ⁷ She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes' rest in the shelter." ⁸ Boaz went over and said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. ⁹ See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well." ¹⁰ Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. "What have I done to deserve such kindness?" she asked. "I am only a foreigner." ¹¹ "Yes, I know," Boaz replied. "But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers. ¹² May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done."

Reflect: Ruth left her family and her home to go and live in a strange place for love of her mother-in-law, Naomi. Boaz honours her for that and calls down God's blessing on her. Do we honour immigrants and refugees, and recognise their bravery, when they seek a new life in our country?

Sunday 23rd August. Matthew 25: 31-46 (NLT)

³¹ "But when the Son of Man^[a] comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations^[b] will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right,

'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' ³⁷ "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters,^[c] you were doing it to me!'

⁴¹ "Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons.'^[d] ⁴² For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.' ⁴⁴ "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?' ⁴⁵ "And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.' ⁴⁶ "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life."

Reflect: read the passage and reflect on who is considered righteous and who isn't. Then think about where our own society's attitude to refugees and those who are "different" places us in God's eyes.

Sunday 30th August. Hebrews 11: 8-16 (NLT)

⁸ It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as

his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. ⁹ And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. ¹⁰ Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God. ¹¹ It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed^[a] that God would keep his promise. ¹² And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them. ¹³ All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. ¹⁴ Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. ¹⁵ If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. ¹⁶ But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Reflect: the writer to the Hebrews says that we are all foreigners and nomads here on earth because our citizenship is of the Kingdom of God. Reflect on the wonderful promise of the last verse- God is our God and he has prepared a city for us! But remember also what Jesus said (Matthew 25- last week) about how we are to behave while we are here on earth!

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