

PCC NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2016



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From The Minister

HERE WE are at the start of a New Year. What will 2016 bring for our church? What do we want it to bring? More to the point, what does God want it to bring? That's something we should *constantly* be trying to discern. Actually that's why I insist on us having what I call "Vision Church Meetings" every now and again. We can't assume, because we spent some time thinking and praying about God's vision for our church a year or so ago, that is job done. The Kingdom of God isn't a static thing: it's growing and changing and developing as God works out his purpose.

That's something we need to remember: we are part, not just of Penge Congregational Church, but of the Kingdom of God. God's purpose for us is part of his purpose for his Kingdom. So we shouldn't be thinking in terms of a vision for our Church that doesn't take account of the larger picture.

Over the last few weeks, I have had several encounters that have made me more aware of the part we play in the larger picture. At the Toy Service last month, we collected a large number of items that I took to the Salvation Army in Maple Road. Through 3 local schools, the Army distributed toys to families in our area who are in need. In sending his thanks, Major Paul said this: "We have supplied toys, gift vouchers and a Christmas hamper to many local families because of your thoughtfulness. May God bless you *and those you serve*". A few days later, I was invited to the Crystal Oasis Christmas lunch along with staff from Spinnaker Trust and Peter Fookes, one of our local Councillors; I had a very strong sense of being part of the community, sitting with people *who serve it*, as we do. Then I went to the Ministers' lunch with other local clergy, and I was given a bag of clothes to bring back to PCC for the Living Well clothes bank store in our basement. The next day, I happened to be in our building when the Bromley Borough Food Bank administrator was there: she told me of the joy of clients who had received Christmas hampers the previous week. She asked me if I realised just how crucial the space we give the Food Bank is to their work, and asked me to thank the church for its support *in this service*.

I have preached several times over the past year about discipleship. I have recently seen discipleship defined as "venturesome love", which is explained as private faith and public action. The Gospel is the text we live by; putting the Gospel into action is the context of our faith. And it has come to seem to me that our task as disciples is not just to encourage people into church on a Sunday morning but rather to encourage people to contribute to God's purpose for humankind. It has taken the various encounters with people from outside the church to make me realise how much of God's purpose we fulfil by looking beyond ourselves, looking beyond our church; by looking to the community around us and working with others *in service*. Some of those others

are Christians, some of them aren't. But Christ's message was meant for everyone, and we serve as his disciples by doing his work and living his word, certainly as PCC but also as part of something much greater- the Kingdom Of God.

My prayer for 2016 is that God will bless us as we minister to each other and to those around us, as we worship him and strive to put the Gospel of his Son, Jesus Christ, into action.

Pam Owen

A Collection of Prayers

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied
"Go thou into the darkness and put thine hand in the hand of God.
That shall be to thee better than light
And safer than a known way"

M.Louise Haskins

Give us Lord God, a vision of our world as your love would make it:
a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;
A world where the benefits of civilized life are shared and everyone can enjoy them.
A world where different races, nations and cultures live in tolerance and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.
And give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Reverend Trevor Williams

Father Forgive

The hatred which divides nation from nation,

Race from race, class from class,

Father, forgive

The covetous desires of men and nations

To possess what is not their own,

Father, forgive

The greed which exploits the labours of men,

And lays waste the earth,

Father, forgive

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,

Father, forgive

Our indifference to the plight of the homeless, and the refugee

Father, forgive.

The lust which uses for ignoble ends the bodies of men and women,

Father, forgive

The pride which leads to trust in ourselves, and not in God,

Father, forgive.

Six Rules

The **six** most important words: "I admit that I was wrong!"

The **five** most important words: "You did a great job."

The **four** most important words: "Consider others—not yourself"

The **three** most important words: "May I help?"

The **two** most important words: "Thank you!"

The **one** most important word: "We"

The **least** important word: "I"

Light in The Night Sky

Faizel the camel

GREETINGS ONCE AGAIN from Faizal, retired camel of the Royal Caravanserai and one-time personal camel of His Highness, Melchior. I have written before of our great adventure, when my master Melchior and his two illustrious companions and fellow-astrologers, Belshazzar and Caspar, travelled to the distant kingdom of Israel to bear gifts and blessings at the birth of a new king. I feel I need to tell you of a strange and exciting event which occurred on that journey.

I remember the scene as if it were yesterday. We were about thirty camels in the entourage that set out from the palace to make the journey to Israel, but the royal camels (myself, Ali and Amir) looked particularly splendid with gold-braided harness and richly embroidered saddle blankets. Ali and I were happy to be side by side, but Amir, Belshazzar's camel, held himself aloof from us, considering himself rather special as royal camels go. We set our faces to the West.

"Why is this camel so blessed uncomfortable?" complained Caspar, "Was he not trained to take a rider?" The long-suffering Ali rolled his big camel eyes, pulled his thick camel lips into a grin and trudged on into the desert. This was the third week of our journey and the illustrious Caspar had complained regularly every second or third day since setting out. He was not a good traveller.

As a camel, I felt great sympathy for Ali. Caspar often complained of how uncomfortable the ride was, despite the efforts Ali made to keep his gait even and to accommodate his master. I hesitate to say it - Caspar was a little on the weighty side and blamed his camel for a problem due to his own fondness for yoghurt and sweetmeats.

The ever-patient Melchior had a gift for calming the petulant Caspar with words of wisdom and this was how Ali and the rest of us had so far survived a trying journey, where we travelled by night to avoid the heat of the day. I felt Melchior shift in his saddle and behind me I heard his long suffering sigh as he answered Caspar, "Haven't we been over this several times already, my friend? You saw the star didn't you?"

"Ah yes," Caspar replied, "Magnificent in size and brilliance. I doubt we shall ever see another such. I have certainly never heard of its precedent. It was in the constellation the Greeks call Pisces, the Fish."

And then the strangest thing happened. The star began to glow really brightly. It was like daylight in the wadi. I couldn't breathe, I was so overwhelmed by the sight. Caspar saw Ali. He was just 100 yards away from

him. He ran up to Ali and said, "I have never been so glad to see a camel in my life. You are a beautiful sight, my camel. Ali cushed and he mounted.

Ali managed to get them out of the wadi. It was not so deep. As soon as they were out and safe, the bright light went away. Caspar had not yet seen us. He spoke to Ali, "Hey, my camel, it was the star that showed me where you were. the star showed me the way and then the camel saved my life. Now I understand. The star shows us the way- the way to life. "

"Melchior!" Caspar hailed us when he noticed us nearby , "Mount up. Make haste. We must push on to Israel without delay!" I was as astounded as my *master to hear these words.*

"Exactly! And that constellation has particular bearing on the line of David, the ancient Hebrew king. So, since David's star was not reported in any text as being of that magnitude and brightness, we deduced that this star heralds the birth of a king greater than David. "

"Yes, yes," replied Caspar irritably, "but what has that to do with us? Why do we need to attend the birth of the king of some obscure tribe miles away from us, albeit he is greater than David, the servant of the Hebrew God?"

I could feel my saddle blanket tighten. Melchior made a supreme effort to keep his voice calm as he replied, "Caspar my friend and colleague, you know as well as I do that these Hebrews, though a small tribe, are by no means insignificant," Caspar stared stubbornly at the road ahead as Melchior went on, "and if this new king is greater than David, he is very likely to rule more nations than David did, perhaps even ours. So it would be wise to honour his arrival. " He exhaled a long tense breath. Caspar rode on in silence.

But this time Caspar, growing tired of being treated like a child, snapped back, "We have been travelling through this godforsaken wilderness for three solid weeks. My entire body is one continuous ache. This camel is the most irksome and irritating beast in creation. Every step he takes causes me excruciating pain and unbearable discomfort. Do we know where we are? All we keep doing is following that star. What kind of pointless journey is this? A wild goose chase, that's what it is. Well I am no longer a part of this fool's errand; I am going home!" And before anyone could stop him he had turned Ali around and galloped away over the desert. Melchior turned me around to chase him. I was worried about Ali. Caspar was not good with camels and Ali had had a very anxious look as he had passed me on the way "home".

We followed them for half the night. Often my master would dismount to read the spoor left by Ali. Sometimes he would speak to me. "Faizal," he would say, "You are a camel and Caspar is my good friend, but sometimes a camel has more sense." Melchior began to see by the spoor that Ali was slowing down. "Faizal," he muttered to me, "I think we'll find them now!"

The night was very dark, but the star was still brightly burning above us. My master reined me I at the edge of a steep wadi. We saw nothing, but we heard Caspar. He was alarmed. His voice was a mere whisper, "By all the

gods... I'm in trouble now. Pitch dark it is. No moon. Just the star. Where is that camel? He's probably run off. I'm on my own in the cruel desert. What am I going to do!" He was clearly very scared, and that was why he said, "Camels! Scum! Dirty smelly stupid beasts! He dropped me here and ran! Blast the dumb camel!"

Caspar my good friend," gasped Melchior, I thought you were going home."

"We don't have time to chat right now. I have had a most enlightening experience just now. I do of course apologise for my lack of enthusiasm on this most momentous journey we have undertaken. But away. Let us find the others and get on to Jerusalem." Melchior turned silently and pointed us back towards Belshazzar. Caspar was all for pushing ahead, but Melchior looked at me and Ali and kept the pace easy to give us camels a rest.

The dawn was breaking as we reached the others. Caspar wanted to get on the journey right away, but Belshazzar told him to look after his camel and give Ali a drink and a rest. Caspar had to agree, but he spent the next few hours telling anyone who would listen about his amazing experience at the wadi.

Later Ali and I had a chance to chat while we enjoyed a well-earned drink. Ali said, "You know what my master is like. He doesn't like travelling and he doesn't like mysteries. It was not knowing that irritated him so much. There at the wadi, the star shone around him and right inside him, and then he understood. My heart is glad for him."

"I am glad for us too!" I breathed with relief.

Chris Mcshane

An Update From the Treasurer

We have had a feast of funds for our cooker coming in. The geese are definitely getting fat. Many thanks to all donors many unnamed such as through the talent show which raised over £100. Also to 1st Penge and Beckenham North Scouts, Lucy Lovick Dance School, Beckenham Cator Women's Guild, Alex and James Charity fundraiser , 8th Penge Brownie Pack, 2nd Penge Rainbow Pack, Outreach to the Homeless, John and Julie Taylor, Miss Joyce Perry and a big cheque from the Police Mutual Fund! Our total is over £1000

The cooker will be here in the new Year and I am sure we will all benefit from it.

In our charitable giving from Christmas collections in church we have given the following:

London Fund for the Blind £103.32

St Christopher's Hospice £ 110.82

We have received thanks from Combat Stress for money raised in November (£120.69) and thanks from the Poppy Appeal for £42.58

Christmas greetings have come from our child in Uganda whom we support through World Vision. He is 10 years old and is called Mubiru Junior and he wishes us a Merry Christmas and a happy new year 2016. It had a picture of a Crested Crane which he coloured in which is Uganda's National Symbol and is on their flag.

Lynn Mcshane

Thanks to Pam Owen, Lynn Mcshane, Chris Mcshane, Debbie Collins, and the congregation of Penge Congregational Church.