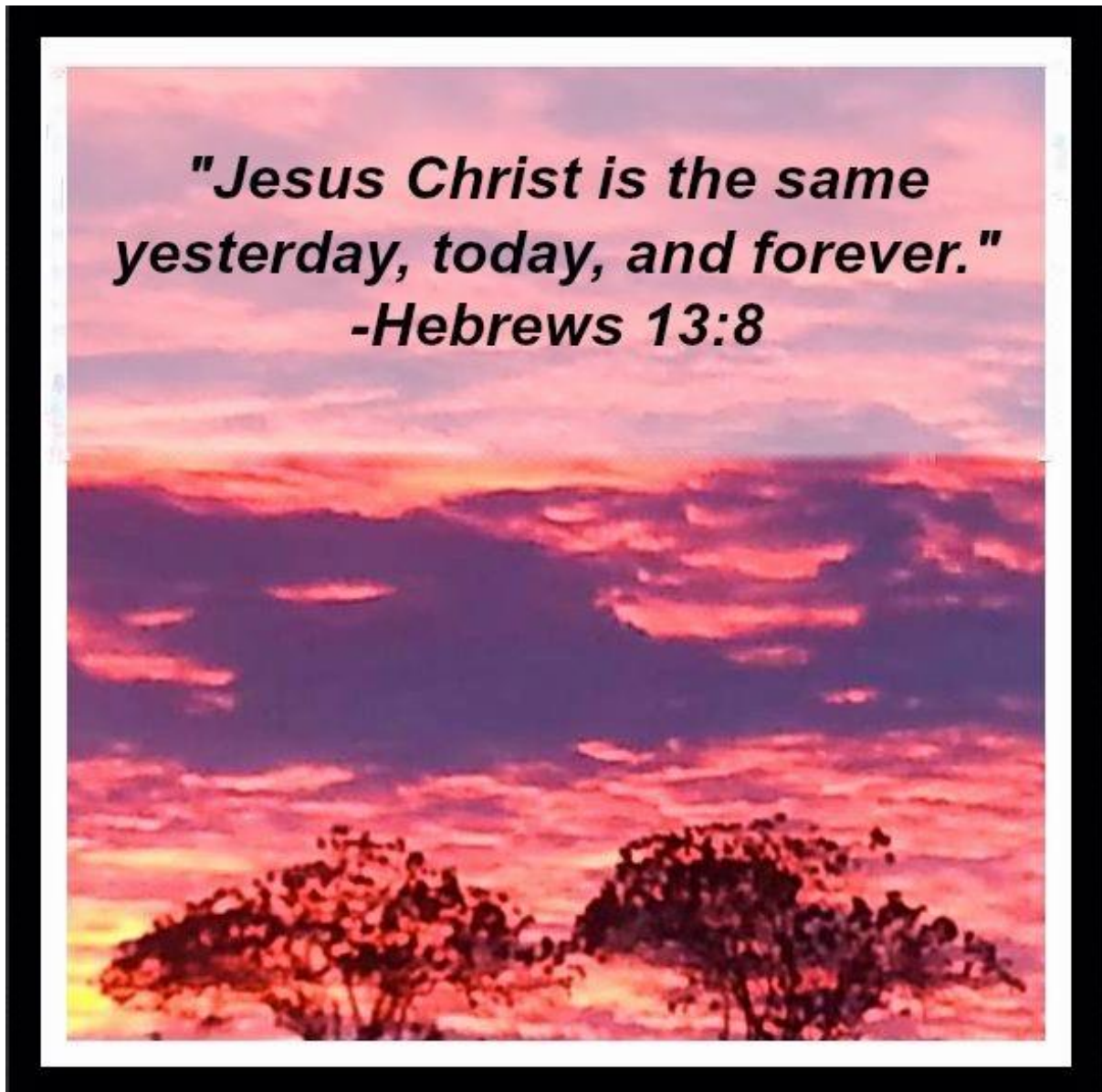


Penge Congregational Church



June 2016 Newsletter

From the Minister:

At our Church Annual Meeting a few days ago, I asked the Church to think a little about our values. This may seem a slightly odd thing to say; we are Christians so surely we live by Christian values? So we need to take those as a foundation and think further.

The reason I brought the matter up is that we have given thought and prayer over a number of years about our vision- what we are as a church and what we want to be. But vision is shaped by values.

In order to give everyone an idea of what sort of values I was thinking about, I used a list of potentially conflicting values given in the notes for the Mission Shaped Ministry course some of us are doing online at the moment. I won't give you the whole list but examples of these, in pairs, are:

Directed from the middle v Consensus

Contemporary v Traditional

Church building focused v Community focused

Excellence v All have a go!

These are things we need to talk about as a church. We can't have a coherent vision of the way we want to do God's work if the values of individual members are causing us to pull in different directions.

So, at the very least, we need to reflect as individuals and be aware of the way our values affect our vision.

As a gathered church, we depend on the Holy Spirit to guide us in the direction God wants us to go. So listening to God and discerning his will is vital, not just for a few of us but, in a Congregational church, for everyone.

I opened the Church Meeting by reading 2 Kings 12: 1-15. It's too long to reproduce in full, and I would really like you to read it for yourselves. But it's about the way in which King Jehoshaphat, under the guidance of the high Priest Jehoiada, went about keeping the Temple in good repair. It talks about the focus on keeping the House of the Lord in good repair but not spending money on silver and gold furnishings that would waste the money given by the people, because they weren't necessary to the worship life of the Temple. The passage ends by pointing out that it wasn't necessary to check up on those who oversaw and did the work

because they were completely honest. I think this teaches us a good deal about the importance of getting our priorities right as a church.

Values affect vision, and vision enables us to decide on priorities for our work in God's kingdom. It is my prayer that we should, as a gathered church, reflect on these things. We are disciples of Jesus Christ and, for us, doing nothing for the kingdom of God isn't an option. But deciding what we do and how we do it is a matter for serious reflection and prayer.

May God bless us as we seek his will together.

Minister's Day Off:

Monday is Pam's day off. Please don't contact her on Mondays unless it's a real emergency.

Thank you.

Fancy yourself as a journalist?

We are looking for people to "guest edit" this Newsletter. If you would like to take responsibility for one or two issues, please contact Pam. We would supply you with the regular bits like the Diary, the Minister's letter and the back page, and you could then give your creativity free flight!

Let's ring the changes a bit!

**Congregational Federation Assembly 2016: Oldham, Queen
Elizabeth Hall**

Last month, Sally and I went on a trip to Oldham. It was only our second Assembly, but it was the 185th Congregational Assembly. We met up with old friends and swapped ideas, stories, successes and failures; laughed and nudged each other along. Being individual churches as we are, it was good to come together and learn from each other. There was a variety of stalls from charities to internal areas such as Learning & Development, LEAF churches or Cong. History. Usually conferences are all about networking but here it was all about 'being together'. We even bumped into an old friend – Siobhan – who we only realised was also there when she got up on stage to sing (& dance?) in the worship, along with other CF-XTRA leaders!

Yes, there were speeches from the stage. No, they weren't boring. We found out about what opportunities the Federation organises for us all to benefit from, across a wide range of differing situations. Training & teaching courses, youth work, mission, and others were all reported on. There was a rallying cry to Congregationalism & a good chance for some worship. We also heard from the Rev. Haroutune Selimian of the Congregational Church in Syria, who gave a moving first hand talk on the harrowing situation all people & particularly the Syrian Church are suffering.

We swapped Presidents. That was more than just changing some figurehead & our own S.E. Area President, Paul Davis, became the new Congregational Federation President. He talked about how we, as a church of Christ, must look to adapt our worship, our outreach into communities and our 'language' of being a church to be heard in today's world with its changing pressures.

It all finished with presentations: churches received their Child Friendly Award and various people were 'commissioned' and put onto the ever expanding Rolls – Ministers, preachers, chaplains, tutors and other newly recognised roles, such as mission enabling.

All in all it was a lovely day of fellowship, worship & learning, with some challenges to all of our Congregational churches to rise to the challenge of living in the modern world if 'not being of it' Oh, & we got to see Siobhan dance on stage!

Douglas

Ministry of Flowers

5th June

Pat Clarke

12th June

Melanie Cogan

19th June

Jean Sumner/Rosemarie Baker

26th June

Marilyn Nicholson

3rd July

Pat Clarke

10th July

Johnson family, in memory of Mollie

17th July

Jean Sumner

24th July

Friendship Club

31st July

Flower Fund

7th August

Beryl Smith

14th August

Flower Fund

21st August

Lionel Sawkins

28th August

Melanie Cogan



...by the skin of our teeth...

Many years ago, in his monumental television series about Western European civilization, Kenneth Clark described how nearly the people of this continent came to losing the glories of the art and literature and philosophy of the world of Greece and Rome: it was "by the skin of our teeth" that we survived the prejudice and barbarism of the period, following the fall of the Roman Empire, that is called "the Dark Ages". And that was due in large part to the care and concern of men of the Church --- a few devout monks clinging to the windy fringes of Britain and Ireland.

On a rather smaller scale, it was "by the skin of our teeth" that we in Penge Congregational Church did not lose our splendid Lewis organ long before it reached its present age. Now into its second century, the instrument continues to inspire praise to God and comfort and pleasure to the people. And that is due in large part to the care and concern of one man of the Church --- and his wife: in the early 1980s it was the perseverance and dedication of the Reverend John Travell and Mrs Travell that ensured the survival of the Lewis organ.

Built by Lewis and Company of Brixton in 1915, specifically for this building its sound was to fill, the organ was complemented by the outstanding acoustic provided by the lofty chancel and the barrel-vaulted oak ceiling of the church. But, by the 1980s, the organ was in great need of repair, and the Minister sought counsel. His first advisor was a salesman for an electronic organ company... A second opinion was provided by Mr Christopher Town, who recommended rebuilding and restoration by the organ builder Brian Bunting. And in 1984, together with Robert Cooper, then Organist of the Church, Brian Bunting set about restoring, replanning, and rebuilding the instrument. The congregation, fired by the enthusiasm of Minister, Organist, and Organ-builder, gave, covenanted, and raised the money needed for the work. Mr Bunting himself gave a new stop: the pedal trombone. And Robert Cooper gave the re-dedication recital in May, 1985, to coincide with the 77th anniversary of the church.

The care and dedication given by Brian Bunting to the organ's restoration, and the regular attention of pipe organ specialists and tuners has ensured that the organ has remained in excellent condition during the ensuing thirty years, and in 2015 its centenary celebrations demonstrated its ongoing capacity to captivate both those who play and those who listen.

Both the Southwark and South London Society of Organists and the Bromley and Croydon Association of Organists and Choirmasters held their annual composite recitals in our church, in February and April respectively, with appreciative audiences attending both events. Several members of both societies then most graciously and generously contributed their time and their splendid musical gifts to the Penge Festival Organ Recital in June. Our church's association with Penge Festival had lapsed some years ago, and it was with great pleasure that the current organist of PCC re-established a relationship with the organizers of the Festival. A sunny early summer evening saw a large and enthusiastic audience enjoying music that was by turns exciting, dramatic, humorous, delicate, and powerfully moving. In short, several distinguished performers displayed to the full the organ's many moods and colours, and its ability to interpret various periods and styles of music: from a rumbustious Norwegian wedding march to Bach's lyrical "Jesu, joy of man's desiring" and on to a monumental prelude and fugue by the French composer Duruflé.

For ten decades the PCC organ has enhanced baptisms and bridal vows; it has comforted, encouraged, and invigorated generations of worshippers – -- not only in Sunday by Sunday devotions, not in the sombre anthems of Good Friday nor Easter's glorious morning hymns, but in concerts given to the wider community. God is in the little vesper played before an audience of music-lovers. Praise is evidenced in the joyous applause that responds to a magnificent and powerful toccata. Musicians are always mindful that JS Bach wrote on his compositions, in Latin, "To God alone be the glory".

Pipe organs were unknown in the civilization of Greece and Rome! But the vitality of the heritage that survived "by the skin of the teeth", and the spiritual and intellectual imagination manifested in such men as the Celtic monks of Iona arguably contributed to the climate of creativity that led eventually to the music of praise of more recent centuries and the invention of musical instruments to accompany that worship.

Martin Luther wrote that next to the Word of God, "the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world". For more than a century we at Penge Congregational Church have been privileged, by means of our wonderful Lewis organ and a number of brilliant organists, to share that treasure with hundreds of believers and non-believers alike: in the words of St Paul to the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice!"

Marilyn



Notes From the Lakes

Looking out of my office window at our new home in Kendal, I feel lonely. The sheep in the field opposite have been moved to higher pasture now that the weather's got warmer. Maybe up onto the common land on the Fells? So I wasn't greeted by the plaintive baas of the lambs when I opened the front door today. All such a long way from edging past prams & shoppers in Penge High Street, but being surrounded by green and by a view of hills and crags at every turn does remind me sharply of God's creation.

Shockingly it's hardly rained for about three weeks here, in this wettest part of England. That certainly helped when Carver church collected for Christian Aid in Windermere last month. Up here I started going to the URC church in Windermere, when we were living there. Now we've moved 8 miles away it's still my church family so I still worship there. Well, actually it's not URC any more. There's a strong Churches Together movement up here, helped by a keen C of E Carlisle diocese, & we're now a Uniting church, which has merged with local Methodists. Some of our preachers have been asked to lead local Anglican services too! That seems to be very much in the tradition of what used to be a Congregational church in the 'old days'.

Services here seem to stick to being organised around the lectionary readings, but they don't have to. So I'm wondering, at the moment, what I'll preach on here next week – 1 Kings 17 & Galatians 1:11, or shall I go on a separate theme? We'll just have to see how I'm led. I've also got to get to grips with a different hymn book, Rejoice & Sing, which they use at Trinity Brixton. And you know how I find it difficult choosing relevant hymns that people know at the best of times. I might even have to throw in some of our faster/action choruses some time. Ewan came & worshipped last year when on a CF-XTRA camp, when I was preaching at Penge, & they weren't used to "We Are Marching" being so fast. Just ask him about it – it's sounded hilarious. We'll see what I am led to do...

I just came to the end of Amos in our Thursday Bible discussions, last week. I must tell you about that another time. One thing, though. I have been impressed by Carver's strong emphasis on justice, people's needs throughout the world & getting out there into the community; but again, more later, perhaps.

Hope to see you all soon when we next worship together. If you're away then, have a good summer. God bless, *Douglas*

Church Diary June 2016

(Events may be added later, so please keep an eye on the Notices on the Sunday Service Sheets)

Sunday 5th June:

10.30 am: Service on Zaccheus, led by the Minister.

6.30pm: The Lord's Supper, led by Marilyn.

Tuesday 7th:



9am-11am: Christian Aid Big Brekkie in the Church.

Wednesday 8th June:

10.30am: Friendship Club

Saturday 11th June:

Penge Festival Fete

Sunday 12th June:

10.30am: Service on Gideon, led by Marilyn.

6.30pm: Bible Discussion, led by Chris McShane.

Wednesday 15th June:

7.30pm: Penge Festival Fete Organ Recital. The Church. Free entry.

Thursday 16th June:

7.30pm: Deacons' Meeting. The Vestry.

Friday 17th June:

4.00pm: Musical Fund-raiser for Alexandra Infants School. The Church.

Sunday 19th June:

10.30 am: The Lord's Supper, and service on Cornelius, led by Douglas Rathbone.

6.30pm: Evening worship, led by the Minister.

Thursday 23rd June:

EU Referendum Day. The Kenilworth Hall is a Polling Station today.

Sunday 26th June:

10.30 am: Service on Naaman's slave girl, led by Lynn.

6.30pm: Taizé service, led by Lynn.

Do you or your family use the Church halls?

People with practical skills required!

Do you specialise in a trade such as carpentry?

Are you good at DIY?

**Could you advise, or assist with small repairs to
keep our halls fit for purpose?**

If so, please contact Chris Parker on

07903 341 079.

Penge Congregational Church

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