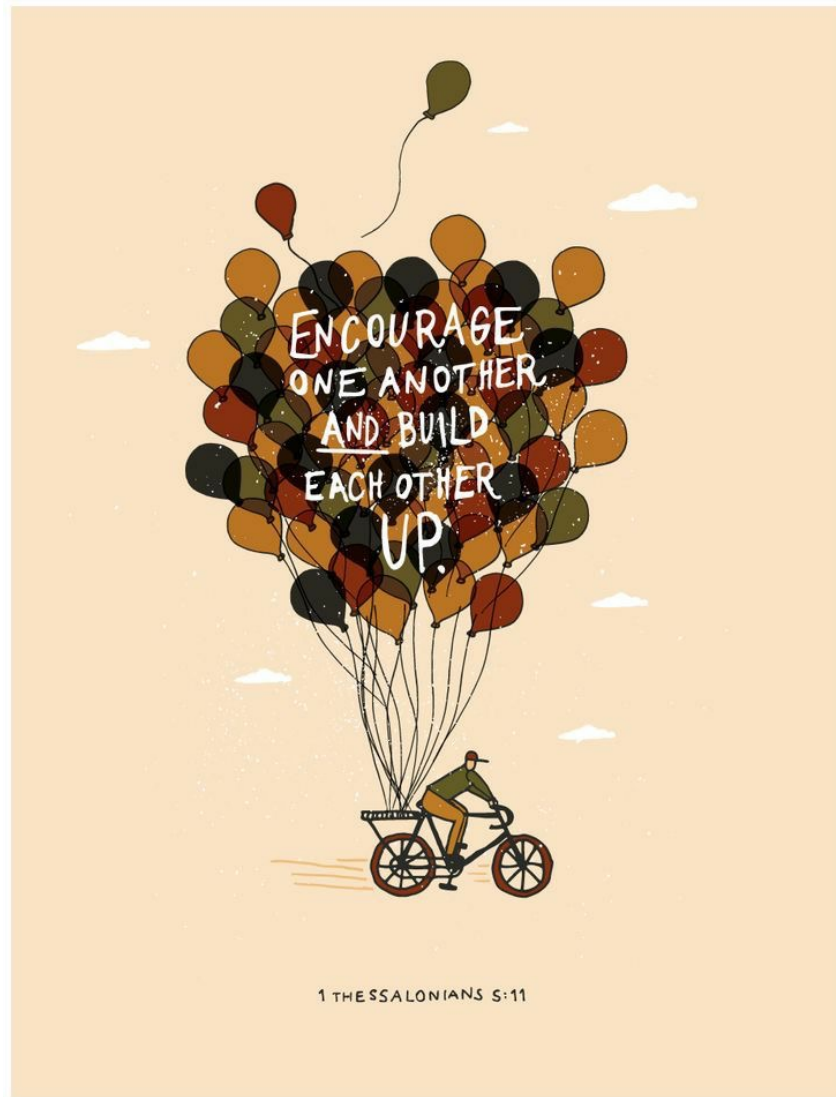


# Penge Congregational Church



## November 2017 Newsletter



## **From the Minister**

On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October, we had a very lovely baptism service. Our Scripture reading was from 1 Peter 2, the passage about the living stones being built up into a spiritual house. Chris Parker, who was leading, spoke about Identity, about all the differing roles we see in our own lives and which ones we define ourselves by.

For that service, for reasons to do with the denominational beliefs of the two sides of the family of the child I was baptising, I wore a dog collar. As you will know, I usually follow the well-established Dissenting tradition of not doing so, except in my case for weddings and funerals. However, on this day, I was dog collared: after the service, as usual, I went to lunch in the Moon and Stars with some of our ladies. We decided on what we wanted to eat and I went up to the bar to order our meals. Usually, I just stand there and wait my turn. On this occasion, however, as soon as I approached, one of the bar staff smiled at me, greeted me and asked after my health. Two middle aged men, waiting near me to buy beer, stood to attention, assumed wide grins and stared at me; one of them informed me that he'd better watch his language, hadn't he? At this point, I remembered the dog collar!

It's interesting, isn't it? Most Sundays I go there to lunch from worshipping and enjoying fellowship with the church. I am always conscious that I belong to Christ, and that I should behave in a way that is honouring to Him; that showing Christ to those I meet is the simplest way to witness to Him. But, on this Sunday, I was wearing a strip of white cellulose round my neck: certainly, that labelled me immediately as a Christian. But I was slightly disturbed by the reaction in the pub, and what it shows us about the perception many non-Christians have about us. The bar man evidently saw the dog collar as a symbol of status and was far more courteous and attentive than he would normally have been to someone approaching the bar to join the queue. The two drinkers were possibly reacting to the novelty of a "woman vicar" but above all felt my presence meant they had to mind their Ps and Qs: they perceived me as a stereotype rather than a fellow human being.

This is something we have to be aware of. Yes, we are disciples of Jesus Christ and yes, we must obey his commandment to "go and make disciples of all nations". We are his living stones, built up into a spiritual house and we must always model Christ in the way we interact with those we hope to reach out to. *But*, it is important not to set ourselves apart as something alien, something non-Christians can't relate to, because that

won't help us in our mission. Jesus himself was sent to earth as God-with-us; to live as a human being, to experience life, feelings, problems, relationships as a human being. He was sent in this way so that those he lived amongst and taught could be confident he understood them and empathised with them. He was sent as a human being so that we can feel close to him and *identify* with him. Would we be able, do you think, to feel so close to Jesus if we didn't have the Christmas story of the child in the manger at Bethlehem; if we didn't have the parables, which could only have been told by a man using what he saw around him to illustrate his teaching; if we weren't able to identify with the human emotions of humour, joy and sorrow, with the pain on the cross?

And, just as we feel so close to Jesus and love him so much partly because we *can* identify with him, we can do our work as disciples most effectively if those we reach out to can identify with us. We are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people"- but we must ensure that doesn't set up a barrier between us and those to whom we seek to take the Light.

**Pam**

### **Living Well at Holy Trinity**

I took the gifts so generously given at our Harvest Service down to Living Well at Holy Trinity, where they were very gratefully received.

I also had the chance to have a chat with Revd. Nick Read, the Vicar there who also heads up the Living Well project. He told me that the need for their services- not just the food bank, but the counselling services, therapy, and practical support- is growing all the time. They have started to keep statistics: each *week* on average the food bank and other services are helping 150 people and the lunch on Fridays is being served to 100.

Please, when you are in Sainsbury's, remember the food donation box for Living Well is just behind the checkouts. Also please remember them, their volunteers and the people they help in your prayers.

**Pam**

*Monday is Pam's day off. Please don't contact her on Mondays except in a case of real urgency.*

## **A Congregationalist in France, by Helen Cole**

*Dear Anglophones,*

*If you choose to read this article, please bear in mind that I originally wrote it in simple, everyday French at the request of my friends from the parish church of Saint-Jean Eudes, the local Catholic Church I habitually attend. It is addressed to them primarily. They are interested in other people and their ways of doing things: they are not theological scholars, and neither am I – we are just chums!*

### Ecumenism

#### **“I feel as if I have been adopted by a large family”**

Hello! My name is Helen and I am English. I have been living in Montcuit with my husband, Nicholas (Nick) since we moved to France in 2007.

In the beginning we attended the Anglican Church, but later we wanted to become more integrated in our community. So, we came along to meet the Catholic Church. The welcome was very warm! Unfortunately Nick was not able to follow everything that went on as his French is not quite up to it, so he returned to the Anglicans, which actually works quite well for us as now we have both French friends and English friends!

#### ***And before 2007 ?***

We have both been Christians since our youth – Christians, but not Catholics. We are Protestants – Protestants, but not Anglicans; we are Congregationalists, that’s to say reformed and non-conformist.

What’s the difference? Well, fundamentally, not a great deal. We believe the same things that you find in both Catholic and Anglican Professions of Faith. The differences lie in the way we organise ourselves and in our hierarchical structures.

Congregationalists do not have a human being at the head of their church; we recognise only God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and His Church. We have neither the Pope, nor the king or queen of England, neither bishops nor archbishops. (I must say that we have a lot of respect for Pope Francis, for his wisdom and for his love for all God’s children).

We do not pray for people who have died and we don’t pray to the saints to help us, but we do think of them and their examples. For us, our Lord Jesus is the only intermediary between us and our Father God.

There are 256 Congregational churches in the UK, which form the Congregational Federation. This federation has a president (male or female) chosen each year, by the members, from among the ministers.

***In a Congregational church you will find:***

A Minister – male or female: usually it's the minister who leads the service and presides at the Lord's Table, or "Communion Table", (*we don't refer to it as an altar*), but not necessarily. Our members believe in "The Priesthood of all Believers", so Nick has presided at The Lord's Supper once or twice, and so have I.

All the decisions are made by the church members who all vote on the different issues, following a discussion at the church meeting. Usually each church will have a small group of members who are known as "deacons". These are not "deacons" as you know them in the Catholic church; they are chosen from the membership and can debate the subjects prior to the church meeting and present the members with a recommendation, but it is always the members who make the final decision.

You will also find lots of Holy Bibles and, I hope, lots of friendly people!

***In a Congregational church you will not find:***

... any statues, not of the Virgin Mary, nor any saints, nor even of Our Saviour; our cross is bare – Christ is Risen, Alleluia!- nor will you find any special, holy candles or votives, but there are usually lots of candles at Christmas, just for decoration.

Well, there you have about 350 words listing our differences! In my opinion those things are not ever so important, but I know that they *are* very important for many people, and I respect these points of view.

***Am I happy in the parish of Saint Jean Eudes?***

I say, "Yes!" without hesitation. We have been warmly welcomed since our first visit. You understood that it's possible to be a Christian without necessarily being a Catholic. Congregationalists read the Holy Bible, say prayers (but sometimes it's the members who write the prayers), listen to sermons (which are also written by members sometimes) and celebrate Holy Communion.

I feel as if I have been adopted by a big, loving family; I have new very kind aunts and uncles and adorable new cousins with whom I can praise the Lord!

You have not only accepted me just as I am, with all my differences, but you have found me a place of my own with little services to carry out: in the choir, with one of the teams which helps to plan the services, and to read one of the Bible passages from time to time.

**Helen Cole.** 2017

*(The photo is of Saint-Sauveur Lendelin, near where Nick and Helen live-Ed)*



### **Flower rota**

November:

5: Joan Fairbrother

12: Friendship Club

19: Melanie Cogan

26: Joyce Perry

December:

3: East Family

10: Melanie Cogan

17: Penny Read

24: Monica Sinclair

31: Flower Fund

## Flower Rota 2018

**In draft form, based on the 2017 rota and various changes made along the way. If your part in this is incorrect, please do not hesitate to let Pam know so that the correct version can be published in the December/January issue.**

### January

7: Pat Clarke

14: Jean Sumner

21: Melanie Cogan

28: Rosemarie Baker

### February

4: Caroline Parker

11: Joyce Perry

18: Melanie Cogan

25: Friendship Club

### March

4: Jean Sumner

11: Lionel Sawkins

18: Pat Clarke

25: Melanie Cogan

### April:

1 (Easter): David Nye

8: Memory of Heather (Jean S)

15: Melanie Cogan

22: Flower Fund

29: Pat Clarke

### May:

6: Joan Sole

13: Kathleen Sewter

20: Joyce Perry

27: Diane Pask

### June:

3: Flower Fund

10: Melanie Cogan

17: Jean/Rosemarie

24: Marilyn Nicholson

### July:

1: Pat Clarke

8: In memory of Mollie (Flower Fund)

15: Jean Sumner

22: Friendship Club

29: Pam (Christina's wedding on 28<sup>th</sup>)

### August:

5: Melanie Cogan

12: Margaret Collins

19: Lionel Sawkins

26: Available

### September:

2: Melanie Cogan

9: Pam Owen

16: Joyce Perry

23: Flower Fund

30 (Harvest): Marilyn Nicholson

### October:

7: Kathleen Sewter

14: Pat Clarke

21: Joyce Perry

28: Melanie Cogan

### November:

4: Joan Fairbrother

11: Friendship Club

18: Melanie Cogan

25: Joyce Perry

### December:

2: East Family

9: Melanie Cogan

16: Penny Read

23: Monica Sinclair

30: Flower Fund.



## **2nd Penge Rainbow Unit**

The 2nd Penge Rainbow Unit celebrated the 30th Birthday of Rainbows by going to Drusillas in Sussex for a fun day of activities on Saturday 1st July 2017. All members were up early and set off at 8.30 am from Penge on a coach and did not arrive home until 7.30 pm.

Our Rainbows enjoyed seeing all the animals, playing in the Hello Kitty Secret Garden, Go Wild, Go Bananas, Go Safari, Get wet, Hippopotobus, Flying cheetahs and the Express train. We had the perfect day weather wise, not too hot, but dry and warm enough for the Rainbows to use the Get Wet splash area.

We had our dinner and tea in the restaurant and the food was excellent, the staff were very good. A very big thank you from all the Rainbows, Leaders and helpers to the Pat Tiley Fund which made this day possible for us by giving us a grant for our travel costs. This was a very special day for our Rainbow Unit one which our Rainbows will never forget and as one mum recently told us, her daughter hasn't stopped talking about it for weeks!

### **Diane Pask and Caroline Parker**

Rainbow Leaders



### **Reginald (Rex) Thomas Perry**

My thanks to everyone who supported me with cards, letters and telephone calls whilst my brother Rex was in hospital until his death on 22 August and afterwards at the funeral. Your continuing support is a great comfort to me.

Bless you all, love from **Joyce Perry**

## **Churches Together in Beckenham AGM and plans for next year.**

On 9<sup>th</sup> October, Churches Together held its AGM in the beautiful church of St Paul's, Brackley Road. Before the business, we had a presentation by Rachel Williams, the Centre Manager for Christians Against Poverty based at St John's Penge. This award winning debt counselling charity was founded in 1996 from a tiny bedsit in Bradford. Since then 60,958 clients nationwide have been supported to go debt free, and 7000 of those have found Christ. In 2016 alone, 1050 clients went debt free, 2500 found Christ and 700 found work through associated job clubs. An example of the sort of work CAP does is the heartbreaking story of a young man who took out a £200 loan from Wonga. As a result of his debt, he became so depressed that he took his own life. The day before he died, Wonga had phoned this young man 32 times. CAP would have easily been able to sort this situation out. Sadly the problem of debt is growing: Rachel has 28 cases on her books, and because she has no capacity for more, her books have been closed by Head Office in Bradford. Until some of her clients have been helped to resolve their debt, any new cases will be referred to another Centre which may have capacity or directly to CAP Head Office in Bradford. The work of CAP is supported by donations from individual Christians or from churches.

After the presentation and an opportunity to question Rachel, we moved on to the business of the AGM. We reviewed the activities since the last AGM and looked forward to the next year. Here are some of the activities to come:

On 9<sup>th</sup> December, there will be carol singing outside Waitrose from 10am-4pm to raise money for Christian Aid.

18-25<sup>th</sup> January is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. There will be a pulpit swap on 21<sup>st</sup> January, and services during the week. As last year, there will be a Taizé service at Beckenham Baptist Church on the Monday (22<sup>nd</sup>) and we will reprise our much praised Café Church on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**For this year only** on Good Friday, there will just be the open air service on Beckenham Green. With the ongoing long term redevelopment of Beckenham High Street, it is felt that the Walk of Witness, with 300+ people walking up the single lane High Street, would be unsafe.

The monthly Ministers' lunch and the quarterly Clergy and Reps meetings will continue, and other events will be published in the Newsletter as they are planned.

## **Church Diary November 2017**

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup>: CHURCH DAY AND AUTUMN GIFT DAY

10.30 am: Morning Worship: A Great Cloud of Witnesses

3.00pm: David Nicholson Memorial recital, followed by tea.

NO EVENING SERVICE

Monday 6<sup>th</sup>:

6.00pm: "Luther's Revolution" lecture. Free Churches House,  
Tavistock Square.

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup>:

9.30am – 11am: Café Church.

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup>:

10.30am-noon: Friendship Club. The Vestry.

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup>:

7.30pm: Deacons' Meeting. The Vestry.

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup>: Remembrance Sunday

10.30 am: Parade Service, including the Act of Remembrance.

6.30pm: Lord's Supper, led by the Minister

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup>:

10.30am: Paul in the Lion's Mouth; The Lord's Supper, led by the  
Minister.

Church Meeting follows Morning Worship.

6.30pm: Bible Discussion, led by Marilyn.

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>:

7.30pm: Worship Team meeting. The Vestry.

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup>:

10.30am: Mission and Evangelism; following St Paul, led by Lynn

6.30pm: Taizé service, led by Lynn

**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December: Advent Sunday**

**10.30 am: Toy Service. Parade. Lucy Lovick's Dancers will  
take part. Gifts of toys are invited, which will be distributed  
by Penge Salvation Army to local children.**

## **Penge Congregational Church**

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Church gathered May 1908

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Mrs Lynn McShane  
Mr Douglas Rathbone  
Ms Jannett Ashley

### **Church Accountants (payroll etc)**

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