

Penge Congregational Church



November 2022



The Minister's letter starts on page 7 this month.

IT'S CRUNCH TIME!



Alongside the beautiful birdsong, reminiscent of spring rather than autumn, there's been another sound in our garden this month. It's the frequent sharp crack as yet another giant acorn hits the ground, sometimes damaging an old cold frame as they plummet from the height of a truly massive oak tree in High Broom Wood behind us.

A stroll down the garden path ensures a constant crunch underfoot, and sometimes a skid! Never before have we seen so many acorns or, surprisingly, so few squirrels!

In the winter of deprivation we are promised I am seriously wondering which savvy cookery writer will be the first to come up with a recipe for the ersatz coffee made from acorns which I believe was part and parcel of wartime fare in the Forties. I was too young to know about caffeine in those days!

Last Sunday a trip into the wood itself revealed yet more of nature's bounty. Glossy brown sweet Spanish chestnuts, decorously nestled in their downy cradles, protected from predators by their green spiny husks, were a joy to behold - and to capture on camera.



Foraging under a clear blue sky and finding fascinating fungii to study too made a semi solitary hour at the end of 10 days housebound with Covid a real joy. It's an ill wind as they say ...!

Jenny Froude (CTiB rep.)



Our Bees

In the summer we had some surprise visitors. We have a doorbell not a buzzer, but these guests managed to announce themselves with a great buzz!

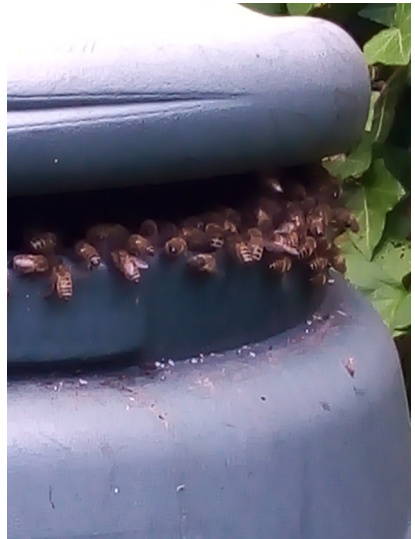


On investigation it turned out to be a swarm of bees. They'd spotted the massive lavender bush in our garden and decided this was a great location for their future hive. There was even a big round hive shaped thing in the corner already – our compost bin! They made themselves comfortable. Unfortunately for the bees, we weren't too keen on a

hive in our compost bin.

Via **Chris Parker and his allotment**, we got in touch with a local beekeeper, **Stephan**, who came round with his gear that evening. By this time the bees were hidden away in the composter and we thought they'd left. But when Stephan cracked open the lid there came an angry buzz. They were definitely settling in to their nice new home!

Stephan scooped out some of the swarm and popped





them in a travel box he'd brought along. The hope was he'd snag the queen – once she was in the box all the rest would follow. He must have been successful because when he returned a few hours later they'd all vacated our compost bin and were safe and sound in the box. Stephan took them home, very happy with his first swarm of the year.

It was quite an exciting event and we all took the chance to try on the spaceman looking beekeeper outfit, but when he left we thought we'd seen the last of our bees.

Fast forward to October



and another surprise guest turned up just as we sat down to our supper, ringing the doorbell this time. It was our favourite beekeeper! He'd come to let us know

that our bees were doing very well, and he brought a pot of their honey along to prove it!

A very sweet and satisfying end to our summer adventure.

Siobhan



Minister's letter

I write as this country's leadership, so sorely needed at a time of financial crisis for so many, has collapsed into chaos. Every one, unless they are very well off, is worried about their ability to pay their mortgage, their heating bill, their food bill. Those of us who work in public services or know people who do are painfully aware of how inadequately those services are resourced; and then we hear talk of further cuts... Looking further afield there is a war in Europe which is causing suffering in Ukraine and also impacting the global economy.

There doesn't seem a lot to be thankful for.

And yet, those of us who have Jesus in our lives, those of us who belong to God, will always have joy and hope in our lives. Soon we will enter the season of Advent when we look forward to Christmas. We will again hear in our worship services those readings that speak of hope, love, peace and light. We will hear Isaiah 9, "The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light."



We will hear John 1: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it." At the darkest time of the year, we can remember that the first words of God recorded in the Bible are, "Let there be light". And there was light. And, above all, we can remember always those words of St Paul in Romans 5, "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

When these times of worry and even despair descend on us, we have those words to cling to. When the country and the world is such a mess, we might worry that we have somehow disappointed God. Even in less fraught times, we know that inevitably we will fall short of what might be expected from us as children of God. I think at such times, we might all sometimes wonder if our mistakes affect God's love for us.

John 3:16 assures us of God's love. He loves us so much he gave his son to die for us so that we will receive eternal life. But what if we fail him even after we've placed our trust in him? That's when we need to remember those words from Romans 5; if God can love us so much when we're at our worst, how can we doubt he loves us when we are his children?

So, in these difficult times, let's live as God's beloved children, resting in the assurance that his love for us is immovable and eternal. Let us also strive always as Jesus' disciples to carry that light out into the darkness, to show his glory to those we meet so that they too may be bathed in its wonderful and everlasting light!

Pam



Harvest Service 2nd October

We had a lovely Harvest service with a good congregation, including adults and young people from our Scouting group. Our theme was “I am the True Vine”, and Lynn and Chris decorated the church with grapes made from purple balloons. Our Beavers had made some pictures of sunflowers and sweet corn which added to the ambiance.

We spent some time during the service discussing our focus words for the October month of prayer.



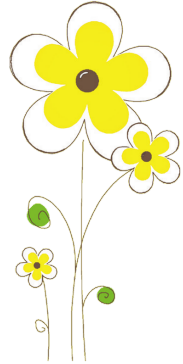
The Beavers, Cubs and Scouts had



spent the weeks before the service collecting food and toiletries for Living Well (photo left) and we were able to add to this considerably during the service. We collected over £145 in cash which was also donated to Living Well.

Since the last Sunday in September we have been asking people to put cash in the collection plate to be donated to the Food Bank at Living Well. Cheques and money in envelopes go to the church; loose cash to Living Well. The demand for the food bank locally has grown so much over the last few

months and many of the local churches have been finding ways to give extra support. This is our way of honouring God's commandment: "When you are harvesting your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands." (Deuteronomy 24)



Prayer Words for November

Last month we had our Month of Prayer, Breaking Ground, where we asked everyone to pray for the mission of our church, and for the wider mission of the church in our communities and in society. To help us in our private prayer, we had a focus word for each day.

We were surprised, to be honest, how many people supported us in this. One of our words, Ploughing, even became the word of the weekend for Coney Hall Baptist Church, who were on a weekend away together.

One person who has found the focus words incredibly helpful in her prayer life is Christina. So much so that she has spent prayerful time finding us all **focus words for November**. If you have also found this to have helped you focus your prayers, please join us in using her daily words, opposite.

1st - Persevere

2nd - Autumn

3rd - Sharing

4th - Colour

5th - Spark

6th - Being still

7th - Overcome

8th - Imagine

9th- Build

10th - Connect

11th - Remembrance

12th - Peace

13th - Create

14th - Warmth

15th - Energy

16th - Comfort zone

17th - Darkness

18th - Roots

19th - Music

20th - Forgive

21st - Rest

22nd - Wish

23rd - Change

24th - Dancing



25th - Value

26th - Endurance

27th - Recharge

28th - Grace

29th - Let go

30th - Grab hold

Simpson and his Donkey.

A Story of Gallipoli.

The story of Simpson and his donkey may nowadays be found quite easily online; but our family has an eye-witness account.

My father, William McLennan, was born in 1889 in Australia of Scottish parents. On the outbreak of war in **1914 he enlisted in the 2nd Light Horse Regiment, Australian Imperial Expeditionary Force.** After service in Egypt, they landed on Gallipoli in 1915. In 1972, by then living with us in England, he wrote, at the repeated request of his two young grandsons, an account of his experiences in the Great War. Twenty pages of beautiful clear handwriting. This is one of his chapters:

“ Death of Simpson, the Man with the Donkey”

On the morning of 19th May, **Simpson**, known as The Man with the Donkey, was killed by a shot from a Turkish sniper.

Simpson, who was known to us as Murphy, had landed at Anzac Cove on 25th April, as a member of a West Australian Infantry Battalion. The next day he came across a donkey wandering about and promptly commandeered it. From then on he spent his time walking up and down Shrapnel Gully and in and out of the smaller gullies that led into it, leading his donkey.

Whenever he came across a wounded soldier who could be moved, he placed him on the donkey, and supporting him against his shoulder took him down to a casualty clearing station on the beach. He then returned with the donkey to search for more wounded men.

Like General Bridges he also scorned to take any evasive action when the bullets were flying. In the 24 days that he spent on Gallipoli he built up a reputation for himself that will undoubtedly live through the ages.

In 1967 the Australian Government issued to men who had served on Gallipoli a medallion and a badge both featuring Simpson and his donkey.



I met him a few times on the Peninsula while he was going on his rounds and also when he and his donkey were resting at a camp in a small gully running off Shrapnel Gully down near the beach. This camp was occupied by a party of Sikhs who were in charge of a mule train and they

took it on themselves to care for Simpson and the donkey.....”

My father, of course, knew nothing of Simpson’s previous life; it is an interesting story, and easily available on Wikipedia.

Dorothea Jessop (CTiB rep.)



Gift Day

Traditionally the first Sunday in November is our Gift Day when we ask people to give us a little bit extra for the work of the church. We could certainly do with it in that the building gets ever more expensive to maintain and to heat; and we have far less income from bookings than we did pre-pandemic.

However, in the current cost-of-living crisis, it seems wrong of us to ask people who are stretched themselves and who already give to the church through the Sunday morning offering, to give us anything extra. So we shan't be mentioning Gift Day in church or making a "thing" of it.

Of course, if anyone who feels a connection to the church and doesn't already contribute anything to our work feels moved to give us a donation, then please do contact Lynn, our Treasurer, whose contact details are on the back of this newsletter.



Readings for November Worship Services

In a 4-Sunday month where we have Remembrance Sunday and Advent Sunday, we won't try and have a monthly theme. These are the Scripture passages we have chosen:

6th November. Matthew 5: 1-12. The Beatitudes: Jesus' revelation of righteousness.

13th November. Remembrance Sunday Isaiah 2: 1-5. The future city of God.

This will be a **Parade Service** for our Cubs and Beavers, who will join in the Act of Remembrance and lay the wreath.

20th November. Acts 9: 1-19. Ananias prays for Saul and encourages him.

27th November. Advent Sunday. Isaiah 11: 1-9. A Branch from David's line.

Remembrance Sunday

Sunday 13th November is Remembrance Sunday and we shall have our traditional Parade service at 10.30am, including the Act of Remembrance and two-minute silence. Our **Scouts** will be joining the commemoration at the Penge War Memorial but our **Beavers** and **Cubs** will be with us, and will lay the wreath.

Christmas Services at PCC

Sunday 18th December at 4.30pm

Carols by Candlelight.

Telling the Christmas story through Carols and Scripture readings.

Alan Langridge will play the organ, and we will be joined by Penge Chamber Choir.

Please stay afterwards for tea and mince pies.

Saturday 24th December at 11.30pm.

Christmas Eve Midnight Communion by Candlelight.

Sunday 25th December at 10.00am

Christmas Day Family Service.



Trick or treat?

“Phoenix, that wasn’t very nice!”

Niamh heard this disembodied voice from somewhere just ahead of her. She wondered what Phoenix had done that invited such disapprobation. There was the sound of a crying child somewhere ahead of her. Who was crying, she wondered. Was it the boy with an axe lodged in his skull? No, he was laughing. Was it the blonde girl up ahead whose clothes were dreadfully torn and smeared with blood? Well, she seemed to be boasting to her friends about how “sick” she looked in this select piece of couture. Niamh would never know. She was wading her way through a tide of children dressed in the ugliest costumes they could find from Marks and Spencer’s and Sainsbury’s.

The noise was intense as she negotiated her way through the hordes of trick-a-treaters laying siege to the shops in the high street.

Niamh wondered when Halloween had become such a festival. When she was a girl it was just a date in the church calendar sometime after harvest. And harvest had been the big event. Halloween was now almost bigger than Christmas. She reached the traffic lights and crossed the road to the stone church just beyond the high street. She passed through the ancient lych gate and wandered among the grave stones in the churchyard. There were no children here. Maybe all the devils and monsters in the high street found a churchyard a bit scary. It was an imposing church, with a flight of steps leading up to a deep arched entrance. She wanted to look at the Halloween procession from the top of the stairs, so she began to climb. Just about halfway she noticed a booted foot lolling on the third step from the entrance. This gave her a start. It wasn’t the foot of a child. Was it a man? She couldn’t make it out, because the rest of the person was in shadow. She wasn’t a nervous person, but there were no lights in the churchyard. It was the stillness of the body that scared her. Was he lying in wait for her? Suddenly, the crowds

in the high street seemed like a refuge from the dangers of the night. She retreated down the steps, walked quickly through the lych gate and made good her escape.

As the clock struck the quarter hour before nine, a black cloaked figure made its way around the apse at the eastern end of the church, descending a grass verge to the paved path which skirted the churchyard and turned toward the lych gate just below the steps. It was Shierra, the assistant curate, returning home after praying in the Lady Chapel. She saw that there was someone lying at the entrance to the church. She sighed with irritation. She knew what this was about. Another aggressive drunk, who had a long story ready about how he desperately needed another handout. A week ago she had listened to such a tale, but had refused the handout. The man had flown into a rage and would have attacked her if Duncan the vergier had not intervened. Adroitly she changed her route home to avoid the stairs leading up to the darkened entrance of the church.

At a quarter to twelve something ghastly travelled up the stairs to the recumbent person. It was a small shadow with a black tail and horns either side of its head. It stopped after reaching the seventh step, picked up its head and walked to the right as if to take a closer look. The strange little shadow ascended the last four steps and disappeared into the deep shadow which veiled the church door.

The clock struck the twelfth hour and there was silence. The silence of the night was shattered by a high, coruscating scream, which seemed to start somewhere deep inside a terror-filled heart, echoing around the churchyard and breaking out into the street. The noise of the procession stopped.

to be continued.....

Chris McShane

BECKENHAM CHORALE CONCERT.

Mendelssohn's oratorio, ELIJAH

Beckenham Chorale's next concert will be on Saturday 19th November 2022 at 7pm at St George's Church, High Street, Beckenham BR3 1AX.

For their performance of Elijah, one of the largest and most dramatic works in the choral repertoire, Beckenham Chorale will be joined by Coro London Chamber Choir and professional orchestra, the St Paul's Sinfonia. The conductor will be Mark Griffiths, the choir's Musical Director, and soloists will be bass, Jonathan Brown who will sing the role of Elijah, Katy Batho (soprano), Jeanette Ager (alto) and Paul Hopwood (tenor).

The background to the oratorio, which falls into two parts, is that God promised to protect the people of Israel if they obeyed His commandments. But Ahab, the King, on his marriage to the foreign princess, Jezebel, built idols for the people to worship, breaking God's covenant.

Come to the concert and find out what happens next !

Tickets £20 & £15 (interval wine or fruit juice and a concert programme are included in the price). Available online www.beckenhamchorale.org.uk or at the door.



Beckenham
Chorale

MENDELSSOHN
ELIJAH

CONDUCTOR
MARK GRIFFITHS

CORO LONDON
CHAMBER CHOIR
ST PAUL'S SINFONIA

JONATHAN BROWN
as ELIJAH

AND SOLOISTS



SATURDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2022, 7PM

St. George's Church, High Street, Beckenham, BR3 1AX

Tickets: £20, £15 Available from Tuesday 18th October

www.ticketsource.co.uk/beckenhamchorale



THE ARTS AT ST. GEORGE'S



@beckenhamchoral

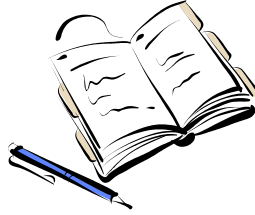


www.beckenhamchorale.org.uk

Registered Charity: 262048

Website:

www.pccweb.co.uk



To arrange a marriage service, funeral, baptism or similar event, please contact the Minister:

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pccprayer@outlook.com

To book any other events (concerts etc.), please contact
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