

WELCOME TO



PENGE

CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH NEWS



## From the Minister

I know some of you, like me, read the *Our Daily Bread* devotions. A recent one took me back to my teenage years when I loved the series of books by Gerald Durrell which starts with *My Family and other animals*. The later books are about Gerald founding and developing Jersey Zoo, and he recounts the acquisition of a young male gorilla, Jambo, which, while proper accommodation was being completed, lived in his spare room for several weeks! In the 1980s I remember a news story about Jambo went all around the world. A small boy fell into the gorilla enclosure, and Jambo, by now a fully grown silverback, stood over him, protecting him from the other gorillas and gently stroking his back until a rescue party came in, at which point Jambo led the other gorillas into their inner enclosure. That experience of being protected by something usually perceived as fierce and dangerous has stayed with the boy, now of course a grown man, all of his life since.

The *ODB* devotion of 21<sup>st</sup> September refers to that incident in the context of 1 Kings 19: 1-12, where Elijah, having channelled God's power to defeat the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, fled from the wrath of Ahab and Jezebel, the King and Queen of Israel who had turned to idol worship. Exhausted, Elijah reached the wilderness of Judah, out of the jurisdiction of Ahab and Jezebel, and could go no further. An angel came and ministered to him with food and drink so that he had enough energy to travel to Mount Sinai, where the Lord met him. It is a very well known passage: Elijah stands on the mountain and there is a terrible windstorm, but God is not in the storm; then there is an earthquake but God is not in the earthquake; then a fire but God is not in the fire. Then, depending on the translation you read, there is either a gentle whisper or a complete silence, and God is there. To Elijah, who had recently channelled the might of God on Mount Carmel in fire from heaven, this must have been unexpected. Yet perhaps he needed to know that God is more than just a great, fearsome and powerful presence.

That quiet whisper should remind us of the powerful gentleness of Jesus, who after all told his disciples that "Anyone who knows me

knows my Father". It should remind us of the Holy Spirit, which came on the Day of Pentecost in tongues of fire, but which dwells in our hearts as our comforter and guide.

The God who is all-powerful and mighty is also the God who has written our names on the palms of his hands (Isaiah 49); the God who shelters us with his wings and gives us shelter beneath them (Psalm 91). Like Elijah, it is important that we too look beyond the power of God to his compassion- the compassion that culminated in sending us Jesus as our Saviour.

Remember the children's song we sometimes sing?

Our God is a great big God  
Our God is a great big God  
Our God is a great big God  
And he holds us in his hands

He's higher than a skyscraper  
He's deeper than a submarine  
He's wider than the universe  
And beyond my wildest dreams  
He's known me and he's loved me  
Since before the world began  
How wonderful to be a part of  
God's amazing plan!

**Pam**

Last month our guest editors, Siobhan and Ewan McShane gave us a beautifully laid out Newsletter. I'm afraid my skills aren't up to theirs, so this month we are back to basics!

Pam's day off is Monday. Please don't contact her on her day off unless you have a pastoral concern that is really urgent. As ever, issues concerning the building- bookings or maintenance- should be notified to Bernie on [pcclettings@outlook.com](mailto:pcclettings@outlook.com) or [pccmaintain@outlook.com](mailto:pccmaintain@outlook.com). If it is an urgent matter, please phone Bernie on 07900 518537

## **The Lord's Prayer**

I was asked recently why we, as a church that does not use a liturgy, nearly always say the Lord's Prayer during our service, and why we say it in the traditional words.

As to the second question, I don't really know why we, and indeed all the other Congregational churches I have worshipped in, use the traditional form of words. But I can answer the first question.

Liturgy, which in Anglican, Catholic and some other denominations, is a set form of words used every week in a service book, is something that has been developed by church tradition.

Congregationalists follow Scripture, not church tradition. The Lord's Prayer is the prayer that Jesus taught to his disciples himself. They said, "Lord teach us how to pray", and he replied, "This is how you should pray..."

So the Lord's Prayer is the Word of Our Lord and Saviour, and how could we possibly improve on that in our prayer time?

However, I have to say that, in saying the prayer every week, we probably suffer from the same problem that arises from the weekly saying of a set liturgy. We tend to recite the prayer, to reel it off. Sometimes the worship leader says it very fast and all our efforts are concentrated on keeping up. This really doesn't help us to focus on the words that Jesus taught us and their meaning.

So let's look at the Lord's Prayer, Luke 11, in a modern translation, from the New Living Translation. (You will note that the last part of the prayer we are accustomed to say isn't Biblical- it was added on by the church- so what you see below looks a bit shorter than we are used to)

**<sup>2</sup> Jesus said, "This is how you should pray:**

**"Father, may your name be kept holy.**

**May your Kingdom come soon.**

**<sup>3</sup> Give us each day the food we need,**

**<sup>4</sup> and forgive us our sins,**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**And don't let us yield to temptation."**

Six short lines but it says it all. The prayer begins with an acknowledgement that God is our all-powerful father, and that we should revere him. It goes on to hope that the kingdom of God will come soon, because that is the moment when all will be made perfect. Verse 3 helps us see that we should only ask God for what we need today and trust him to look after our needs. Verse 4 reminds us that, if God is to forgive us, we should extend forgiveness to those around us. And the last part asks God to help us be strong in the face of everything that tempts us off the straight and narrow.

This is the ending that has been added on by the church: "Deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. For ever and ever. Amen". Well, it finishes off the prayer by going back to the beginning and acknowledging the power of God, and that everything comes from him.

So, next time we say the prayer together in church, providing worship leaders don't go too fast (!), let us be aware of *what* we are saying, and remember that when these words were first said, they came from the lips of Jesus himself.

**Pam**



## **Autumn Gift Day, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

Each year, we have 2 Gift Days. The Spring one falls on the Church Anniversary, which nowadays we usually mark on the second Sunday of May. The Autumn one falls on Church Day, the first Sunday in November; which for the last couple of years has been marked by the David Nicholson Memorial Recital.

We have mixed feelings about Gift Days. Those who attend worship regularly already give through the weekly collection. Also, we dislike giving the impression that we are completely focused on the church building rather than the fellowship of people which actually IS the church. However, we have to be practical. Our building isn't just a place where we worship on Sunday; it is also a centre for many community groups, and hundreds of people participate in activities there every week. It is a horrendously expensive building to maintain and it takes all the money we receive in rentals to keep it even vaguely together. In winter, it costs us over £10 per hour just to heat one of the big halls!

Our hall users have surely noticed the painting that has been done over the summer. What you probably won't be aware of is that, in September alone, we have had to have 2 boilers repaired, and an expansion tank fitted to one. The system in the Kenilworth Hall has been power flushed (the church one will follow). We have had the fire extinguishers inspected and two replaced. And the routine tasks of replacing light bulbs etc (often made far from routine by inaccessible light fittings!), adjusting things, checking things, cleaning, gardening go on every day. We hold our breath every time it rains heavily or there is a strong gale; we know the roof isn't in good condition and we also know we couldn't begin to afford to replace it.

So, yes, 4<sup>th</sup> November is Autumn Gift Day. If you feel able to make an extra contribution to the upkeep of the building, please either put it in the collection plate on that day, send a cheque made out to Penge Congregational Church to our Treasurer, Lynn McShane, or contact Lynn on 07817 862158 if you would like bank details.

Thank you!



## **Art etc... Further notes on the development of the SE20 Art Group**

Have you ever watched a basketball match? You start by watching the ball very carefully, but as the game goes on the pace of the passing becomes so frenetic that you gaze at some point in space between you and the players and wait for the score board to tell you who's winning. I was at the planning meeting for this year's SE20 Art show and it was a bit like that. Really difficult to follow what everyone was saying. There was a lot of anxiety. The recurring theme was space: space on the walls: space on the stage: where to hang the pictures.

Why all this stress? Why the sharp words? Why the chaos in the calm of this little community art group? This year there were 26 artists taking part. Last year there were 15. The number of entries had almost doubled. But the hall was still the same size. If you consider that most of the artists would want to show about four works, we needed enough space to display 100+ works.

Now last year we were thinking the hall was immense. We were having panic attacks when we thought about where we were going to find enough work to fill that vast white space. This time it seemed as if the hall had shrunk. I could see into the mind of each artist and what I saw was a shape resembling a postage stamp accommodating several large paintings (or a sort of swarm of smaller works). How do you fit a rhinoceros in a matchbox?

And there in the midst of all this sat Mary, like the Madonna amongst the Lilies, calming the troubled breasts of her children with words of wisdom and peace. Mary Gordon-Smith has coordinated the SE20 Art Group for a few years now. She's one of those people who quietly get things done. In the past few years quite a few exciting things have happened in the group. There are workshops, which happen spontaneously, but often. We staged a new exhibition in February, focussing on sculpture and 3-D art. The Art Trail is now firmly established as a Penge Event. Mary has presided like the Royal We over all these burgeoning activities.



I think even the ultra-calm Mary started showing signs of stress at the prospect of squeezing in all of more than a hundred works into what seemed a severely limited space. Mary is nothing if not an expert at delegation. Walter and I ended up as the curators of the exhibition, a position sought after by no one, requiring bags of 'passion' and promising no reward of any kind. We smiled gratefully for the honour heaped upon our unworthy shoulders.

The fateful Friday morning dawned as it inevitably would and we began to wait for the hoards of artists to descend on the church hall. Walter gave a brilliant rallying speech, calming most of the anxieties threatening to bubble up once more and everyone fell to the task of covering the hall with art. The Spirit was with us that day. There were no serious conflicts about space and the whole atmosphere was one of quiet cooperation. No one simply hung their work and left; everyone looked around for someone who needed help. That is why we had the whole exhibition hung by 3:00 pm.

Of course, there was a practical reason for this efficiency too. Two weeks before the show, John, Petra and Sandra had invaded the hall and fixed a picture rail all around the hall at the ideal height. John has lots of ideas for improving things and none of them has failed so far. Not only did the picture rail make it much easier to hang the pictures, but with the rail up, it was easy to move paintings around into better positions by simply sliding the works along the rail.

The result of all this preparation was an exhibition which we can only describe as successful on all fronts. We sold just under 20 original works; the opening was a vibrant affair with plenty of discussion and lots of food and wine; people of all ages and all walks of life attended, including many children; even taking down the show had people talking excitedly about how it all went. The event brought the whole of the local community together to express curiosity, share ideas and simply talk to each other.

Our thanks to PCC for their unstinting support through all the years. It is largely due to this annual exhibition that the SE20 Art Group have grown as they have. This is a clear witness to the power of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of our community. God is building

his kingdom through the way PCC involves itself in the local life.  
This church is a pioneer of the healing of all peoples.

### **Chris McShane**



### **Flower Rota for the next three months**

#### 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: In memory of Edna East  
9: Melanie Cogan  
16: Penny Read  
23: Monica Sinclair  
30 Flower Fund

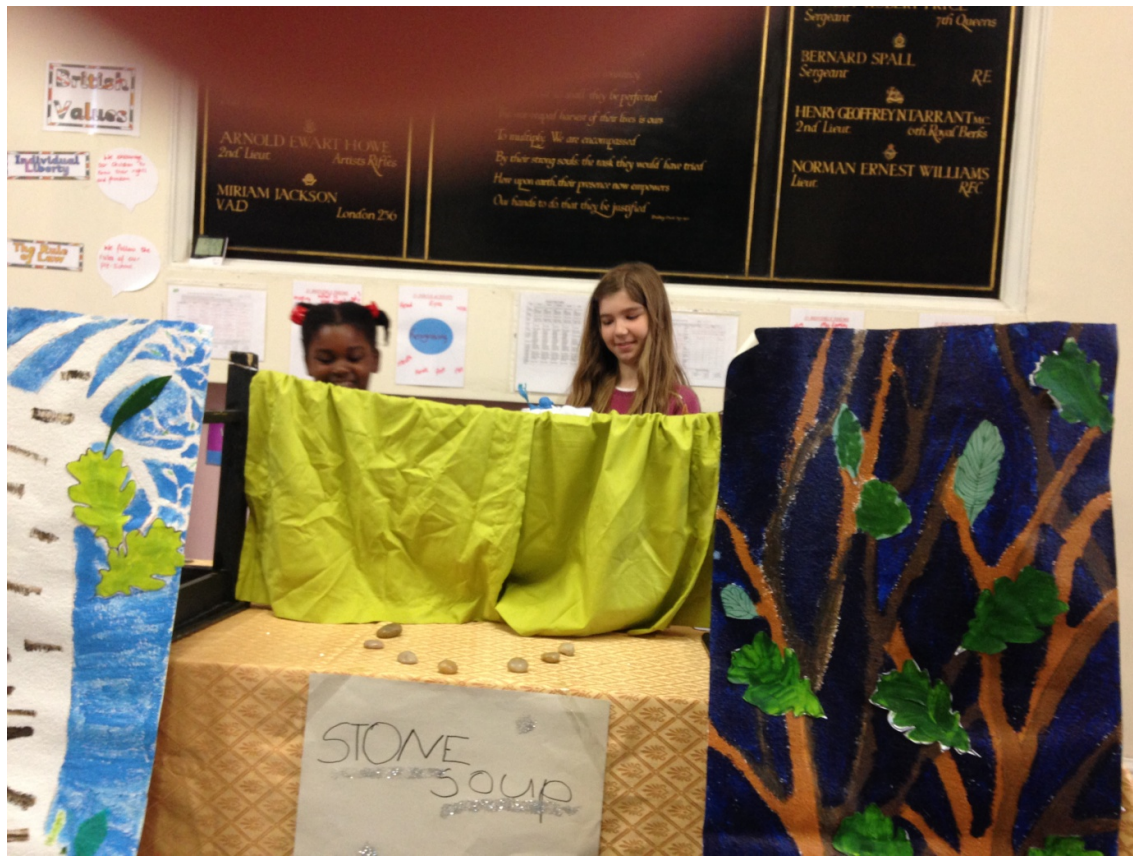
## **Puppet Show**

### **Stone Soup**

For several months, our small Junior Church has been preparing a Puppet Show. Over the Summer, attendance at worship was understandably sporadic so it has taken a while to create the lovely puppets and the side drops, but, last Sunday morning, the Grand Performance finally took place! A great triumph for the puppeteers and the director (Lynn); and greatly enjoyed by a large audience. The puppets and the scenery are works of art in themselves, and we will store them in hopes of using them again.







## **Church Diary October 2018**

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup>:

9.30-11 am: Café Church

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>:

7.30pm: Deacons' Meeting. The Vestry.

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup>:

10.30am: Keeping your eyes on God, led by Jannett.

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

Monday 8<sup>th</sup>:

7.30pm: Churches Together in Beckenham AGM. Avenue Baptist Church.

*Our Lay Reps are Chris and Lynn. If anyone else is interested in attending with them, and the Minister, please go along!*

Wednesday 10th:

10.30-noon: Friendship Club. The Vestry.

Sunday 14th:

10.30am: Discovering God in prayer, led by the Minister.

6.30pm: Bible Discussion led by Chris M.

*There is a small wedding blessing at 3pm. It would be lovely if some of the church family could attend.*

Sunday 21st:

10.30am: The Lord's Supper; discovering God in Communion and hospitality, led by Lynn and Chris.

6.30pm: Evening service, led by the Minister.

Saturday 27th:

10.30am-4pm: South East Area Assembly at Latimer Chapel, Stepney. *These meeting are for everyone, and are a good opportunity to meet other Congregationalists and enjoy a time of fellowship together.*

Sunday 28th:

10.30am: Discovering God in creation, led by the Minister.

6.30pm: Taizé service, led by Lynn.

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> November is Church Day. The David Nicholson Memorial Recital will take place at 3pm, followed by afternoon tea.**

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November is Remembrance Sunday, which falls on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armistice that ended WW1 in 1918. At 10.30am, we will hold a Parade Service which will include the laying of a wreath and a two-minute silence.**

# PENGE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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Church gathered May 1908

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