

Penge Congregational Church



December 2020

An initiative of Hope Together

We are asked to pray where we are, that God will give us opportunities to witness to Christ, at 8.20pm (20.20 hours) on the 20th of each month, for 20 minutes.

The Prayer for Sunday 20th December 2020:

Read John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

And pray:

Gracious Father, thank you for sending Jesus into our world to bring hope to all. We ask for the light of your love to reach into many hearts this Christmas season and draw those we have been praying for to put their trust in you.



*Pray ... that God
will give many
opportunities to
speak about Christ.*

Colossians 4:3



From the Minister

All this year, we have been praying the Prayer 2020 prayers from Hope Together on the 20th of each month at 20.20. We had wanted to do this together, but as things turned out we only managed one session before Covid stopped us. It might seem almost ridiculous to be praying about hope during such an awful year. During the first lockdown, I conducted 17 funerals in 11 weeks: at that time only 10 mourners were permitted, people living at a distance weren't allowed to travel and stay over, and those funerals were often unbearably bleak. Hope seemed in very short supply.

And yet, for the Christian there is always hope. There is hope because there is faith. The writer to the Hebrews says, "What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see".

Advent is a time of hope and anticipation. For the non-believer, the hope and anticipation is of presents, of too much to eat and drink, of lots of socialising and fun. For the Christian, the hope is of the coming of the Messiah, and all that means for our faith. So, for the Christian, this strangest of all Advents still bears our hope. I'm sure we are all waiting with bated breath to see whether the government is going to allow us to spend time with our families, but, no matter what, we will celebrate the moment when God demonstrated that he so loved the world that he sent his only son so that all who believe in him will have eternal life.

At worst, we may not be able to celebrate the birth of Jesus together in church. At best, we won't be able to sing the beloved carols together; we shall have to adapt our worship to comply with Covid restrictions and that precludes many of the things we enjoy the most about Christmas fellowship. If the restrictions are eased after 2nd December, we shall mark the coming of the Christ child with a short midnight communion,

and a family service later on Christmas morning. If they aren't eased, we hope to open the church during Christmas Eve evening for private prayer, which is permissible under lockdown rules.

Perhaps one of the most valuable lessons this year has taught us is that we can still be church outside of the building. For those of us with internet access, worship has been via Zoom and podcast; those without have had to rely on what has been put in the Newsletter. But fellowship- by phone, text message, in conversations in front gardens or in communal areas in blocks of flats- fellowship has carried on. Those who have met virtually on Zoom at least twice a week have prayed for the fellowship, and I'm sure we have all prayed for one another in our private devotions. We may not have spent much time in each other's physical company but we are still church. When this is over, which it will be, we shall still be church. It may be that we don't revert to normal, but instead use the lessons of this year to find a new normal. But we shall still have our faith, strengthened perhaps by the difficulties of 2020, which will still be "the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen". We shall start December this year as we always do filled with the joyful promise of the Messiah!

God bless us all this Advent, and always!

Pam

Christmas at PCC

In addition to the weekly Sunday morning services:

Sunday 20th December at 6.30: Come and hear the story of Christmas- readings and music to listen to.

Thursday 24th: Church open for prayer and praise from 8pm; short communion service after midnight.

Friday 25th at 10am: Christmas Day Family Service.

We are still meeting virtually on Zoom twice a week for an informal Bible discussion, on Thursdays and Sundays at 6.30pm; and once a month for a "social". By this means, we have reconnected with church members who have moved away from the area. At our November "social", we enjoyed fellowship with Sherelle , Jack and Debbie, all living at a distance, as well as our usual hook up with Douglas in Kendal; we also caught up with a couple of local members who joined us. It would be lovely if others who have internet access would join us for these sessions, which are also a time of catching up with one another. If you haven't used Zoom before, simply Google Zoom, and opt to Join a Meeting. Zoom ID 597 482 5851. Password 304 428. Lynn will issue an invitation by text message when we have set our next date for a social but the Bible studies continue as they have twice a week since March. Do come!

If we are allowed to open for public worship after 2nd December, the Christmas postbox will be out as usual in the church. If we aren't, we invite local members of the church family to ask the Minister and Deacons to act as posties so that we can get our cards to one another.

We don't usually publish a January Newsletter. However, this year, we will do a cut down version containing Scripture readings for January Sundays so that, whether or not we can open the church, everyone can read the same passages and pray together in person or in spirit.

Readings for Advent and Christmas

Sunday 29th November. Advent Sunday.

The Hope of a Messiah. John 1: 1-18.

1 In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He existed in the beginning with God.

3 God created everything through him,

and nothing was created except through him.

4 The Word gave life to everything that was created,

and his life brought light to everyone.

5 The light shines in the darkness,

and the darkness can never extinguish it.

6 God sent a man, John the Baptist, **7** to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. **8** John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. **9** The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. **10** He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. **11** He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. **12** But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. **13** They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. **14** So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

15 John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'" **16** From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. **17** For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

Sunday 6th December. God's provision. Exodus 16: 1-9 (NLT)

16 Then the whole community of Israel set out from Elim and journeyed into the wilderness of Sin, between Elim and Mount

Sinai. They arrived there on the fifteenth day of the second month, one month after leaving the land of Egypt.² There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron. ³“If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt,” they moaned. “There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death.” ⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, “Look, I’m going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. ⁵On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual.” ⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “By evening you will realise it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt. ⁷In the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaints, which are against him, not against us. What have we done that you should complain about us?” ⁸Then Moses added, “The Lord will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread to satisfy you in the morning, for he has heard all your complaints against him. What have we done? Yes, your complaints are against the Lord, not against us.” ⁹Then Moses said to Aaron, “Announce this to the entire community of Israel: ‘Present yourselves before the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.’”

Sunday 13th December. Mary’s Song. Luke 1: 46b-55 (NLT)

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

⁴⁷ How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

⁴⁸ For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.

⁵⁰ He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.

⁵¹ His mighty arm has done tremendous things!

He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

⁵² He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.

⁵⁵ For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever."

Sunday 20th December. Promise of the Messiah. Luke 1: 26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. ²⁸ Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favoured woman! The Lord is with you!"

²⁹ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰ "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" ³⁴ Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

³⁵ The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For the word of God will never fail." ³⁸ Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

Daily readings for Christmas week

Monday 21st December. Luke 1: 57-66 (NLT)

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth's baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ And when her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹ When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. ⁶⁰ But Elizabeth said, "No! His name is John!" ⁶¹ "What?" they exclaimed. "There is no one in all your family by that name." ⁶² So they used gestures to ask the baby's father what he wanted to name him. ⁶³ He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone's surprise he wrote, "His name is John." ⁶⁴ Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God. ⁶⁵ Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, "What will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way.

Tuesday 22nd December. Luke 1: 67-80 (NLT)

⁶⁷ Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy:

⁶⁸ "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has visited and redeemed his people.

⁶⁹ He has sent us a mighty Saviour
from the royal line of his servant David, ⁷⁰ just as he
promised through his holy prophets long ago.

⁷¹ Now we will be saved from our enemies
and from all who hate us. ⁷² He has been merciful to our
ancestors by remembering his sacred covenant—

⁷³ the covenant he swore with an oath to our ancestor
Abraham. ⁷⁴ We have been rescued from our enemies

so we can serve God without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and
righteousness for as long as we live. ⁷⁶ "And you, my little son,
will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will
prepare the way for the Lord. ⁷⁷ You will tell his people how to

find salvation through forgiveness of their sins.⁷⁸ Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us,⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace."⁸⁰ John grew up and became strong in spirit. And he lived in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.

Wednesday 23rd December. Matthew 1: 18-25 (NLT)

¹⁸ This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. ²⁰ As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

²³ "Look! The virgin will conceive a child!

She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,
which means 'God is with us.'"

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Thursday 24th December, Christmas Eve. Isaiah 9: 2-7 (NLT)

² ^[a] The people who walk in darkness
will see a great light.

For those who live in a land of deep darkness, ^[b]
a light will shine.

³You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice.

They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder.

⁴For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders.

You will break the oppressor's rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian.⁵The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire.

⁶For a child is born to us, a son is given to us.

The government will rest on his shoulders.

And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity.

The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

Friday 25th December. Christmas Day. Luke 2: 1-7 (NLT)

2 At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ²(This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

⁶And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

Saturday 26th December. Boxing Day. Luke 2: 8-20

⁸That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹²And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." ¹³Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

¹⁵When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." ¹⁶They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, ¹⁹but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. ²⁰The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Sunday 27th December. Matthew 2: 1-12 (NLT)

2 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ²"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him." ³King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked,

"Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
are not least among the ruling cities of Judah,
for a ruler will come from you
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'"

⁷Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

⁹After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

Monday 28th December Matthew 2: 13-18 (NLT)

¹³After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." ¹⁴That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, ¹⁵and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt." ¹⁶Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. ¹⁷Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ “A cry was heard in Ramah—
weeping and great mourning.
Rachel weeps for her children,
refusing to be comforted,
for they are dead.”

Tuesday 29th December. Matthew 2: 19-23 (NLT)

¹⁹ When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. ²⁰ “Get up!” the angel said. “Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead.” ²¹ So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. ²² But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod’s son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee. ²³ So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

Wednesday 30th December. Luke 2: 25-33 (NLT)

²⁵ At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him ²⁶ and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, ²⁸ Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,
as you have promised.

³⁰ I have seen your salvation,
³¹ which you have prepared for all people.

³² He is a light to reveal God to the nations,
and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

³³ Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel

to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. ³⁵As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”

Thursday 31st December. Luke 2: 36-40

³⁶ Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. ³⁷Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. ³⁸She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

³⁹When Jesus’ parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. ⁴⁰There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favour was on him.

Penge Congregational Church

172 High Street
Penge
London
SE20 7QS

Church gathered May 1908

Minister

Reverend Pam Owen 020 8659 2010
Email pamjowen@hotmail.com

Treasurer

Lynn McShane 07817 862158
Email lynn.mcshane22@gmail.com

Room Bookings

Admin Manager: Bernie Hall 07900 518537
pcclettings@outlook.com

Maintenance for hall users

pccmaintain@outlook.com

Organist

Marilyn Nicholson 020 8778 5064

Archives

Chris Doran
Email pengecong@chrisjdoran.plus.com

Webmaster

Callum McShane
Email callum.mcshane@gmail.com

Website

www.pccweb.co.uk

Deacons

Reverend Pam Owen
Chris Parker
Lynn McShane
Douglas Rathbone
Jannett Ashley

Church Accountants (payroll etc)

Edwards Chartered Accountants,
275B Croydon Road, Beckenham, Kent. BR3 3PS