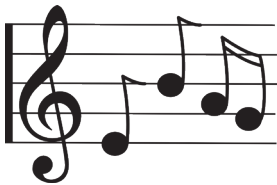


Penge Congregational Church



December/January 2022/23

From the Minister

As this is a double issue, I should be wishing everyone both a **Happy Christmas, and a Blessed and Peaceful New Year.**

2022 hasn't been the best of years, has it? War in Europe which shows no sign of being resolved in a positive way; an economic outlook which looks like bringing financial hardship to all but the very wealthy; continued foot dragging by governments and businesses over the now critical climate emergency... And yet, as Christians we continue to put our hope in Christ. Are we being the naïve, happy clappy Christians, so often portrayed in film and on TV?

Even worse, are we being smug, secure inside our little bubble, certain we are saved and therefore safe? Well, I expect there are some Christians like that. But no-one who knows their Gospel, who has taken in what Jesus had to say about the Kingdom of God, about who is important there in that place where those most valued by the world are at the bottom of the pecking order, and those least valued by the world are at the top, should be thinking like that.

There are too many Scripture references to list, too many instances of Jesus telling us that we are to be



disciples seeking always to bring others to Him. To pick just one, we are to be salt and light, we are the light of the world, shining forth like a great city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see.

This is the time of year where we all long for light. And of course it is the time of year when all Christians celebrate the coming of the Light into the world, the Light that shines through the darkness that can never overcome it. Crucially, it is also the time of year when even those who don't believe in Christ, those for whom Christmas is a mere holiday, a time of days off work in which to over-indulge and give and receive presents, when even they feel the pull of the child in the manger and of carols sung on station concourses and in shopping centres.

So surely a time when Christians can least afford to sit back and indulge in Christmas food etc.? Certainly our carol service and our Christmas Eve Communion bring in people from the local community who will probably never come through the door again until next Christmas. So let's take that once a year opportunity to shine that Light on them, to sow that seed and pray fervently and persistently that, watered by God the vine grower, it will take root and grow.

As we look forward beyond Christmas to 2023, may that be the year the message is really heard in our community! May that be the year that the Light grows and shines along with the increasing daylight! May 2023 be not just a Happy New Year but one in which the peace of God which passes all understanding may

touch those around us and bring them into the Light of Christ's presence!

May God bless us, those we love, and most of all those we meet during this season and into the New Year!

Pam



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.



Church Meeting

For the benefit of our readers who aren't Congregationalists, a Congregational Church is a gathered church. That means we believe in the model of church you read about at the beginning of the **Acts of the Apostles**. *"And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had... They worshipped together, met in homes for the Lord's Supper and shared their meals with great joy and generosity - all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all people."* (**Acts 2: 46-47**). There was no human hierarchy: everyone lived and worshipped together on an equal basis.

Today a Congregational church is still based on that, and on **1 Peter 2: 4-9** which talks about God building his people up into his spiritual temple. We are all living stones in that temple: we are the *Body of Christ and Jesus is the Head*.

We carry that through from worship and praise to the practical matters that go with having a building to manage, paying our way etc. So each Church Member has a say in how we conduct ourselves as a church. Roughly **six times a year, we have a Church Meeting** where everything about church life is discussed; where decisions are necessary, everyone can have their say and all Church Members get to vote.

We don't consider a Church Meeting to be like a company's shareholder meeting because a company has a board and people who make every day decisions

and who are therefore accountable to shareholders. In the church, everyone is equally accountable to God, and therefore everyone has a responsibility in the conduct of church life.

We believe Church Meeting is an extension of worship: it is our responsibility and our privilege to be a church that listens to God and seeks to do everything according to his will. So every Church Member has a responsibility to take part in church life as they are able. If a member is not able to be physically active, they can still take part in discussion at Church Meeting, and above all they can pray, seeking always God's will, which might be expressed to anyone, not just to the Minister or the Deacons!

Our first **Church Meeting of 2023 will take place after Worship (about 11.45am) on Sunday 29th January.** Do please join us! If you aren't a Church Member, but consider yourself part of the church family, you are very welcome to attend and have your say. You won't be able to vote, but your views are just as important as anyone else's!

Pam



Readings for Worship Services

4th December Isaiah 60: 1-7. Future glory for the nations.

11th December Philippians 2: 5-11. At the name of Jesus...

18th December

10.30 am: Luke 1:5-17. The birth of John the Baptist foretold.

***4.30 pm: Carols by Candlelight.** We will be joined by **Penge Chamber Choir**, and organist **Alan Langridge**. Tea and mince pies will be served afterwards.

*In the event of England reaching the World Cup Final, the service will be put back to 6.30pm.

24th December at 11.30 pm: Christmas Communion by Candlelight.

25th December

10 am: Family Service, led by Chris Parker.

1st January Revelation 21: 1-7. The new Jerusalem.

The readings for the remaining services in January will be decided by the Worship Team in due course.



CAFÉMATTHEW5:4

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted

**A safe place for those carrying the
weight of any kind of loss, not just
bereavement**

Tea, Coffee, Cakes & a Listening Ear

Christ Church Main Hall, Fairfield Road

**Wednesday 23rd November: 2-3.30pm
&**

*** Monday 19th December: 2- 3.30pm**

*** 19th Dec. Cafe - Blue Christmas Tree**
An opportunity to put messages of love on
our special commemorative Christmas tree

BEREAVEMENTMINISTRY@Christ Church Beckenham

office@ccb.org.uk / 020 8650 3827

LOST

'Before a word is on my tongue, you, Lord, know it
completely'

Well, I'm glad you do God, because the word on my
tongue

Is an elusive thing, slipping silent from my grasp
As though it has never been.

That apposite adjective, pithy phrase, technical term,
once second nature, now

Lost in the fog, brain fog.

'I control the world as long as I can name it.'

Confident claim from Lively's Claudia.

Control the world, I'd settle for controlling my brain.

I stand at the bar, ready to order for two

'Gammon and egg for my husband', I say

But that act of speaking these words has pressed a
button,

A delete button, with no option to undo.

The name of my dish

Lost in the fog, brain fog.

'And thereby hangs a tale.'

Hangs, a fate that befalls my tales, begun so boldly, and
yet,

A pause for breath, the train of thought derails,

My story stutters and stalls, my yarn unravels. Its
conclusion

Lost in the fog, brain fog.

When will it end? Will coherent thought return?

Will I be able to depend

On ideas staying where they are put?

Not wandering like recalcitrant sheep, refusing to be
penned

No-one can tell me. No appointments available.

I wait and hope and pray

Don't leave me here,

Alone in this fog,

Brain fog.

Jackie M. Parsons

*Jackie caught the virus last Christmas and is still coping
with Long Covid, only slowly regaining some still elusive
energy.*



Remembrance Sunday

We marked this day at PCC with a parade service, well attended by our Beavers and Cubs, and their leaders. We thought about the words of the prophet Isaiah about a future time when metal used to make weapons of war would instead be used to grow and harvest food; and about the need actively to work for peace and harmony both at national level and in our daily lives. Our prayers were for those who have suffered and died not just in our country but across the world, with particular thoughts for those involved in wars today. We managed to time the Act of Remembrance perfectly and the young people (some of them very young) observed the 2 minute silence impeccably.

After the wreath was laid by a Scout and a Leader, we heard the story of **Simpson's donkey** (see November newsletter) and the young people spent a few minutes colouring an image illustrating the story.

Meanwhile, our doughty **Scout group** was embarking on the first part of a day of Remembrance activity.



Beginning at 9am at the **Upper Norwood War Memorial**, they walked down to the one in **Penge** in

time to join in the Act of Remembrance there. They **dropped in on us at the end of our service** to be fortified with hot chocolate, then, with the addition of the Group Scout Leader, off they went on the rest of their walking tour of war memorials: first the one at **Beckenham Crematorium**, then on to the one in **central Beckenham**, then the one in **Shortlands** and finally up the hill to the **Bromley** one for 4pm.

We were glad to see them at 11.30 and wish them ***God Speed for the rest of their very substantial act of remembrance!***



Some Thoughts to ponder...

1 Meditation is not a way of making your mind quiet. It is a way of entering into the quiet that is already there - buried under the 50,000 thoughts that the average person thinks everyday. Deepak Chopra

2. Thinking is difficult. That's why most people judge.

Carl Jung

3. Letting go gives us freedom, and freedom is the only condition for happiness. If, in our hearts, we still cling to anything - anger, anxiety, possessions - we cannot be free.

Thich Nhat Hanh

4. Adopt the pace of nature. Her secret is patience.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

5. A pessimist makes difficulties of his opportunities; an optimist makes opportunities of his difficulties.

Henry Truman

Some quotes sent in by Jean Bowden



Autumn Leaves Concert

Choir leader **Jessica Blake** with the **Penge Chamber Choir** and **Penge Junior Voices**.

This was the first performance for the ten youngsters in the **Penge Junior Voices** and they produced a lovely performance - singing some pieces alone and some with the adult choir.





Beckenham Chorale's 'ELIJAH'

On Saturday 19th November Beckenham's own choral society joined forces with the London-based chamber choir 'Coro' to present Mendelssohn's ever-popular oratorio *Elijah* to a large and appreciative audience at St. George's Church. **Elijah was composed in 1845-6 and first performed in Birmingham's new Town Hall in August 1846, with Mendelssohn himself conducting.** He was a great favourite of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, both of whom attended one of six further performances that he conducted in London the following year, only shortly before his death.

Taking the composer's place as conductor on this occasion was **Mark Griffiths, who has led the Chorale since 2016 (and 'Coro' since 2003)** and had thoroughly prepared the musicians for what proved to be an outstanding performance of extremely high quality, greatly enjoyed by all. The demanding leading role of *Elijah* himself was taken by Scottish baritone **Arthur Bruce**, standing in at the shortest notice for an indisposed *Jonathan Brown*; other solo parts were sung by soprano **Kathy Batho**, mezzo-soprano



Jeanette Ager, tenor **Paul Hopwood**, Dulwich College pupil **Taylor Lai**, playing the part of the Youth, and the **combined choirs** representing the people of Israel. The orchestra was the South London-based **St. Paul's Sinfonia**, formed in **2004** and making a **welcome return to Beckenham** after taking part in several previous Chorale concerts.

The audience showed their appreciation by demanding several 'curtain calls' and sent many favourable comments and congratulations to the choir afterwards. Everyone is now looking forward to the next concert on **18th March** for which the **Chorale** is already working on **Durufié's Requiem** and **Parry's Hear my Words, ye People**.

Jenny Carrington



St Mark's Players' Family Pantomime

*featuring children from
Glenlyn Academy*

St. Mark's
Players



Supporting Charities
Since 1959

The Pied Piper



of Pantoland

Live
band

January 2023

Saturday 14th, 21st, 28th - 2.30pm & 7.30pm

Sunday 15th, 22nd - 2.30pm

Adults £12 Children £9 (Group discounts)

**St George's Hall
Albemarle Road, Beckenham, BR3 5HZ**

Supporting



Demelza

StChristopher's
More than just a hospice

★ **BOOK NOW** ★

www.sm-players.co.uk

07422 516436 / 07973 408807



Look what's on offer in January....

The Pied Piper of Pantoland

“H-E-L-P!! Rats are invading Pantoland! Please come and help the Pied Piper to get rid of the pesky varmints! You'll not be able to resist singing along with hits such as Hakuna Matata, Walking on Sunshine, Rewrite the Stars and many more great pop and show songs, plus we have the delightful young dancers from The Glenlyn Academy who'll get your feet a-tapping! Eeek!! Rats!, H-E-L-P! “

Trick or Treat - Part Two

Milly pressed her hands to the small of her back and bent back to ease the stress that had built up from an hour of constant bending. The body had not been easy to examine due to the thick layers of fat around the chest and abdomen. The effort had been worth it she thought, because she had determined the cause of death. There had been no marks anywhere on the body, so it had been up to her to determine the cause of death by conducting an autopsy. Her mobile began to buzz persistently. She went over to the desk where she had left it and saw an alert. DI Ofori was on the line. He was a bit impatient as a rule, but this time she wouldn't make him wait. The buzzing continued while she removed her gloves and washed her hands. She knew it would. DI Jack was nothing if not persistent, the original dogged detective, who hunted down the remotest leads and often came up with results when others would have given up and gone on to another case.

“You took your time, didn't you?” was all the answer she got when she finally held the sleek, flat, glowing piece of tech to her ear.

“Good morning, Jack!” she said rather pertly.

“Yes, yes. I’m good too. Haven’t you done yet?”

“My apologies for the delay ... sir. I had quite a lot to go through, mainly adipose tissue.”

“Ad... what?”

“Fat, Jack, the stuff your doctor keeps telling you to get rid of.”

“Don’t get personal. What have you got?”

“The cause of death is nicotine poisoning.”

Jack snorted, “So he smoked too much!”

“No, Jack. The nicotine people smoke isn’t fatal. It’s the rubbish in the cigarette that causes disease. We’re talking about a lethal dose of nicotine. Whoever administered it knew what they were doing and had access to poisons, maybe a doctor or a pharmacist ... or someone who knew one of those.”

“We could have something there. I’ll look into it.”

The line went dead.

Bert and Anand, being very close to each other, tended to think the same thoughts. To some it seemed as if they were telepathic, but it was only that they were very much of the same opinion most of the time. As they walked past the church, they thought it was rather festive, being festooned with white tape, but the impression changed when they noticed the words “Crime Scene” printed in blue on the shiny tape. They looked at each other quite mystified. They were actually on their way to the morning service, but made a detour to the newsagent. Bert liked to read it from the paper while Anand took out his mobile and danced his fingers over the glowing screen. When they compared notes later, they found something that shocked them to the core.

“Dead body on church steps” was the the headline on the front page of The Times. On the very church steps! How was one to feel safe anymore? Their refuge from the cruel world had been invaded. The sanctity of the temple had been desecrated. What Anand found on his mobile was even more disturbing. The victim had been identified.

He was Tim Largier, the organist from the nearby Methodist chapel. Bertie looked at Anand and found a lined face, a grieving face. Tim had been their friend – not just an acquaintance, but a confidant who had helped them through their struggles in being accepted in the church community and shared many meals and outings with them. Suddenly he was gone. No time for good byes. Anand felt as if someone had hit him in the stomach.

Inside the church, Detective Inspector Jack Ofori walked slowly and solemnly down the aisle, working his way past the white-suited SOCO's busily packing away the mysterious tools of their trade, little bottles of chemicals, white containers of finger print powder and a few very expensive pieces of photographic equipment. He walked up to a figure in a warm grey woollen suit, with a pink floral shirt bursting out from between the lapels and setting the cuffs aflame.

"Hi Ahmed, my little fashion plate. What treasures did you dig up for me?" The aforementioned Ahmed looked disdainfully down his rather patrician nose at Jack. This didn't have the desired effect, as Jack was at least a head taller than Ahmed.

"The treasure has been somewhat disappointing, Inspector. We found a cache of silver canisters scattered over a grave, laughing gas I think. Among them was this odd little bottle. Don't touch! I'm sending it to the lab."

"Any fingerprints?"

"Hundreds, literally hundreds. Don't hold your breath though, they were all from inside the church. Not likely to be conclusive."

"Thanks Ahmed. Any idea how long the lab will be?" Jack asked somewhat unnecessarily, since Ahmed was not the head of the lab.

"Oh, this little escapade has top priority. Everyone will be working all night. Expect answers tomorrow noon. I have an interesting little find to show you, if you promise not to touch," said Ahmed archly, lifting a neatly labelled, flat plastic bag up with a pair of tweezers. Jack made a face and took a good look. It was a gold cufflink.

Chris McShane

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

The South London Singers will be celebrating Christmas with a candlelit concert on Saturday 17th December at St Paul's Church, Brackley Road, Beckenham BR3 1RB at 7.45pm.

Join us for a programme of festive favourites and Carols for choir and audience.

Music performed by the choir will include Fantasia on Christmas Carols by Ralph Vaughan Williams, as we mark the 150th anniversary of his birth, Harold Darke's In the Bleak Midwinter, John Stainer's How Beautiful upon the Mountain, works by John Rutter and David Willcocks as well as a touch of musical theatre with a medley from The Sound of Music. The conductor will be Nick Wibberley with Organist, Jack Stone, & guest solo performers.

Tickets, standard entry £15, children under 12 years free, 12 -18 & students half price, Friends of the SLS free or £10, will be available at the door (by card or cash) or in advance at www.southlondonsingers.org.uk Ticket price includes a programme and a glass of wine or soft drink on arrival. There will also be a paid bar in the interval. Mince pies will be free!

The South London Singers is celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year and is planning a display of memorabilia including photos, posters, programmes, reviews, articles etc showing 40 years of music-making in Beckenham. This will be put up at the concert for everyone to see.

The choir continues to flourish, rehearsing on Mondays at 7.45pm at Beckenham Methodist Church, Bromley Road, and prospective new members are welcome to come to any rehearsal to try us out. The first rehearsal for the next concert will be on Monday 16th January. Contact Mary Jackson for more information 02086562815 or look at the choir website.

Jenny Carrington

The South London Singers Christmas Concert

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

SATURDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2022
7:45 PM

St Paul's Church, Beckenham
Brackley Road, BR3 1RB

Standard entry: £15
Gold & Silver SLS Friends: FREE
Bronze SLS Friends: £10
All prices include a drink on arrival

*A programme of festive favourites including works
by John Rutter, Ralph Vaughan Williams,
Harold Darke, John Stainer and a dip into musical
theatre with a medley from The Sound of Music.
With many traditional sing-along Christmas Carols!*

**Join us for some Christmas Carols
and a glass of wine!**

follow us on social media or find us online:
www.southlondonsingers.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 800934

Website:

www.pccweb.co.uk



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

Pam Owen on:

pccprayer@outlook.com

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

pcclettings@outlook.com

Tel: 07900 518 537

For enquiries related to this website please contact Callum McShane on:

callum.mcshane@gmail.com

To submit articles for the monthly newsletter:

margaret@ecoharmony.org

Deacons at the moment are

Jannett Ashley

Douglas Rathbone

Chris Parker

Lynn McShane (treasurer)

lynn.mcshane22@gmail.com