

PCC NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2013



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When You're Feeling Down

DO YOU FEEL SOMETIMES that your efforts are not really appreciated? We're all expected to be passionate and committed about what we do (or maybe what someone else would have us do). We're given a flower pot and a few bits of string and people seem unimpressed when we use these meager resources to make the church appear like the temple of Solomon. One pours literally several thousand cups of tea in a life time, but one is not thought of as a great achiever for this service to the greater community. Listening to Pam's very powerful message on Sunday I was strongly moved by the thought that Elijah had a very similar problem.

Elijah was on the run. He had worked very hard for the Lord, fighting forces of oppression and suffering constant rejection for his very awkward insistence that Ahab was there to lead his people, not suck their blood. The results were very depressing. Far from experiencing a "Spring" of liberation, Israel had descended steadily into the most oppressive and cruel regime in its history. All the prophets had been murdered by Ahab and the people were being placated with false promises of better times to come from the prophets of Baal. The God of Israel was effectively dead in the hearts of the Israelites.

Elijah was not desperate; not really surprising when we consider how very isolated he was. Nelson Mandela, even in his darkest days in prison, was surrounded by sympathizers, who acted as mentors and encouraged him in his struggle. Elijah was not so lucky. Ahab had cut Elijah off from his supporters by making Baal the state religion. To confirm that he had murdered all the prophets of God, leaving Elijah completely alone to carry a message to a people who no longer wanted to hear it. Elijah more than anyone needed encouragement. I'm sure that's what he hoped to find when the Lord spoke to him on the Mountain of Horeb

It seems to me that God was pretty inscrutable in this situation. There were none of the great words of encouragement he had given to Solomon. The great cataclysmic fall of Jehricho was long gone and the sea didn't open up. It was in fact difficult for Elijah to hear the voice of the Lord at all. In the middle of all the noise there was a quiet breeze and that is how the Lord chose to speak to Elijah – good job he was listening!

Sadly for Elijah, there were no sweet words, no pat on the back for Elijah's hard work, just a to-do list.

Why did the Lord behave in this distant way with Elijah? Why did he give him so little encouragement? Couldn't he have reassured Elijah? Praised him for the good work he was doing? He seemed to expect Elijah to pick himself and dust himself off without any further sign that he was on the right track.

But surely there is something I am missing. Yes, something is staring me

in the face and I keep missing it!

God Spoke to Elijah.

He didn't speak through some great spectacular event, he didn't speak through an intermediary, an angel or another prophet, not even a donkey as some have had the privilege of experiencing. He, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, spoke directly to Elijah. That is at once the greatest encouragement Elijah could have and the most powerful witness to his mandate and the power of his calling. If Elijah had any doubts about his calling to be a prophet, *The* prophet of God, he had just been told by the man himself that he was the one to bring the word of the Lord to Israel. If he had any doubts about the power he had to change Israel, he had just been given the full backing of the only power that really matters. If the people had any doubts about Elijah's authenticity, the living God was about to show them in no uncertain terms who his man was.

The Lord is speaking to us in these times of doubt. Open your eyes to see how he is blessing us. God be with you at all times and in all things.

Chris Mcshane

Quiet Moments

Have courage, when the day is drear,
God's presence is forever near
His moving spirit guides our way
And helps us find the strength each day
Within his shadow – safe, secure,
We know our trust in him is sure.
For as the seasons, Moon and Sun,
With ceaseless course their journeys run,
So God's great love is ceaseless too,
And keeps our lives enriched anew

Elizabeth Gozney

Caring

If you have shared another's load
Or eased another's pain,
If you have soothed a troubled soul,
Life has not been in vain.
If you have cheered another's heart
Or made a sad face smile,
If you have calmed another's fear,
Your life has been worthwhile
If you have said a tender word
Or dried another's tears,
If you have spread you share of love,
Then you've been needed here
If you have leant a helping hand
Through times of care and strife
If you have done a little good,
You've made the most of life.

A History of PCC's Buildings #6 – The Halls

The Kenilworth Hall

THIS WAS the Church's first permanent building on the site. The dedication stone in the north wall was laid by Norman Clark on behalf of the children of the Church on the 30th of December 1911. Mr. Clark was the superintendent of the Sunday School and the first secretary of the Young People's Council.

The hall was dedicated on the 20th of March 1912, and used for services whilst the rest of the building was progressing on the site of the “tin 'all”. It has been so used again on occasions when the sanctuary has been impossible to heat in severe winters and during the cleaning operation in 1979. Apart from this, its uses during the past hundred years are legion: large and small meetings, socials, dances, bazaars, concerts, plays, Scout and Guide meetings, Junior Church, Summer holiday clubs, harvest suppers, Badminton, Table Tennis, a polling station etc. have all been accommodated; not to mention its use as a Servicemen's club during WWII.

It's designed seating capacity was 500, with a further 100 in the gallery, though the permitted numbers are now less than half this and the gallery may

no longer be used. The small stage may now be extended forwards for dance performances and illuminated by floodlights from the side and gallery. Worthy of note is the open timber roof with single hammer beam trusses.

An item of curiosity is the small door in the wall on the right of the stage; originally this gave access to a lift shaft (“dumb waiter”) connecting with the kitchen below, but this was judged to be a fire hazard by the authorities and had to be closed, followed later by a ban on the use of the gallery and storage lockers under the stage frontal - Health and safety restrictions are no new thing.

The gallery was subsequently used as a billiard room by the “Phoenix” Youth club and is now a storage area.

At one time the Minister and choir assembled in the Kenilworth Hall prior to the morning and evening services for prayer; the side door to the Church was thrown open and the choir sang, unaccompanied, one or two verses of a hymn; the sound of this distant singing, as heard by those sitting in the Church, was truly delightful; at the end of the hymn the choir, followed by the Minister, filed into their stalls in the chancel.

The Basement

The door on the left of the stage led to the aforementioned kitchen area. With the closure of the dumb waiter, many generations of “tea ladies” had to climb the steep stone steps with laden trays and steaming kettles. Through the kitchen is the original room for a central boiler, fired first by coke, then oil, and finally gas. The huge boiler room remains in situ, but the building is now heated by three separate smaller ones. Off the boiler room is a fuel store, now containing a disused oil tank; it has a vaulted ceiling, incongruously impressive for such a mundane room. A second stairway led down to the boiler room, initially from outside but now from the present Church Hall lobby. It enabled actors to exit from one side of the stage and mysteriously re-enter from the other! It was floored over when the oil boiler was installed and now accommodates one of the new boilers as well as the Childminders' Club toys.

The basement area is now used as storage by the Outreach to the Homeless team comprised of members of several local churches.

The Vestry

Formerly known as the “Council Room”, as the Diaconate was originally called the “Church Council”, this lies in the angle formed by the transept and the chancel. It is furnished with a long, massive oak table and a set of heavy leather seated and backed chairs. On its walls at one time hung paintings of the first Minister, Reverend Ernest Barson, and some of the founding members, but these were removed in the 1960s.

The room above was, for many years, the robing room for the ladies of the choir, in the days when both men and women wore purple gowns and mortarboard hats. It contained three oak tables matching the one in the room below, and also an impressive model of the building in a glass case, until this was smashed. The room later became the lounge where the youth fellowship met after evening services. It was then let out as offices to Bromley Victim Support, and is now occupied by Spinnaker Trust which supplies religious education in schools.

A small room adjacent was known as the "Teacher's Library" as for many years it housed books for Sunday School teachers. It subsequently provided office space and a maintenance workshop before becoming a small office for Spinnaker Trust.

The Kitchen and "Snug"

The equivalent area in the angle formed by the chapel and chancel was originally the Minister's vestry and the choirmen's robing room. The latter was used during WWII as an office for the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Organization. In the late 1960s part of it was walled off as a small kitchen by Mr. Bill Simpson to replace the inconvenient one in the basement. Its outline can still be seen in the wooden blocks of the floor. As part of a number of building improvements completed by 2000, the Minister's Vestry was converted into the present larger kitchen, and the former kitchen area re-incorporated into an adjoining room with communicating serving hatch, instantly dubbed the "Snug".

Above the stage and kitchen area is a small flat which was occupied by the caretaker when a full-time one was employed; subsequently by Assistant Minister Reverend George Grierson; and is now rented out.

The Tower

There are two lofty rooms in the tower, one above the other. At one time, the lower was used as a club room by the Guides and the upper by the Scouts, but both were eventually abandoned and relegated to storage space. From the upper room a steep open staircase leads to a trapdoor onto the flat roof, from which there is a good view of the surrounding district, a facility made use of by wartime fire-watchers. There is a mounting for a flagstaff in the middle and for many years a flag was flown on special occasions, but the staff became unsafe and was not renewed. From the outside, the upper room appears to be a belfry, but there are no bells.

A Church office was recently created in a small side room on the first floor.

The Church Hall and The Memorial Room

This block was the last major work of construction, being dedicated on 30th of April 1921. Like the original church buildings, it's architect was Mr. P Morley Horder.

The Church Hall was planned to meet the needs of the expanding Sunday School, but has also been much used for meetings, socials, pre-school playgroups, and dancing schools. At one time it served as a gymnasium – early pictures show wall-bars on the far wall, and hooks for climbing ropes are still in place.

The Memorial Room was built to perpetuate the memory of those who died in WWI. The memorial itself was described in part 3 of this series. Owing possibly to the fact that the windows are all set at high level, the Memorial Room has always seemed to be a room set apart from the remainder of the buildings and enjoys a quiet and peaceful atmosphere of it's own, appropriate to its original purpose; for many years it was the only part of the Church premises, apart from the Church itself, where smoking was forbidden. The fireplace on the north wall once held a coke stove. Above it is a large painted panel. An initial offering of a depiction of St. George and the Dragon being rejected as unsuitable, Mr. Horder suggested the painting we now see of the legend of St. Christopher fording a river with the Christ child on his shoulder.

To be Concluded

Chris Doran

Dougie's Difficult Word of the Month

WORSHIP

To worship something or someone, they have to be worthy of that worship. God, who created, sustains and loves each one of us, pretty much falls into that category. The 1647 (congregational) Westminster Catechism states that “Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever”. The first commandment, we should remember, is to worship God alone.

As St. Luke says, “worship” is honor, respect, and reverence shown to a person. If we take time to ponder each of those words separately (honestly, it's worth it) we see that it's something we should do for God in all our life; in all our activities.

If we honor God (Judges are called your Honor or your Worship!) We do it in different ways: alone and together. Worshipping together is crucial as we are the body of Christ honoring the head of the family together – the whole group making more than just the individuals. Worshipping together binds us to each other and to God. In reality it is his due as our loving, living God. This is why services tend to start with “Adoration” - adoring and thanking our Lord and judge, as is his due. That's why our sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism are mysteries we take part in together.

Hymn singing and scriptural teaching done together is crucial and are also right to “give” to our Lord, but true worship takes up all of our lives. As we get closer to God we realize how much more he deserves our worship at all times. Our lives are worship! God wants us to come closer to him. He's just waiting for us. We come closer by living our lives in line with our relationship with God.

If we have a relationship, we want to express it naturally, so we want to do this in communal worship, it may be hymns, chorus' or something that enables you to express yourself better. You may find the 17th Century language of the King James easier than the Good News Bible, or Drums and Guitar rather than an Organ expresses better what you feel when you stand before God. Our worship should be honest, open and giving full reverence to our Creator at the same time. If we don't express ourselves honestly we are not being honest with our Lord.

There's so much more to the worship that is our whole lives – all of our lives – but what counts is that we are trying to live it as 'honor, respect and reverence' shown to God. It's something we all need to reflect on and do that often.

Douglas Rathbone

A Letter

DEAR FRIENDS AT PCC, a big “Thank You!” To all the tea and coffee ladies who faithfully helped me over the years, as many of you know, 2012 was not a very good year for me (and many others). I am very grateful for all the support I have received, prayer and lifts etc.

Thrilled to bits with lovely lap tray and pretty mug – have made good use of them!

But don't think you have got rid of me entirely – still hope to be around a bit longer to boss everybody about as usual.

God's blessings to you all in 2013.

Jean

Thanks to Chris Mcshane, Chris Doran, Douglas Rathbone and the congregation of Penge Congregational Church.