

Penge Congregational Church



February 2023

Cover photo

‘Penge is on fire tonight’

Photo taken on 2nd January 2023

From the Minister

We had a very encouraging Christmas in terms of the numbers of people attending our services; for the Carol service we had provided 70 service sheets, but had to run off ten more and even then some people were sharing. A few days later, we had a wonderful evening of “Festive Jazz”



with the Ben Hancock Quintet, which also attracted a good crowd. Partly as a result of all this, our occasional organist, the leader of the Penge Chamber Choir and a couple of other people got together to talk about developing the church as a music venue; this would provide us with some much needed income but above all, it would attract people inside the building.

Attracting people in is of course very much a part of our mission to “make disciples of all nations”, but we shouldn’t forget that Jesus didn’t wait for people to come to him: he sent out his disciples to announce to people “that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” If you read Matthew, chapter 10, you will see that Jesus chose his twelve disciples and then immediately gave them instructions about going out.

Today, we are Christ's disciples. We may say - and I hear it said often - that we aren't worthy, that we aren't equipped, that we just aren't ready. But, if you read the Gospel account of Jesus sending out his disciples, you note that Jesus didn't call them because they were ready. They weren't. This rag tag group included Matthew, a tax collector, one of the most hated categories of people; Judas, someone who later betrayed Jesus; James and John, two over-ambitious fisherman brothers; and Simon Peter who had very poor impulse control and would later deny Jesus three times. They weren't remotely equipped to preach the Gospel to the populace. And yet, here we are. The Acts of the Apostles recounts just what that rag tag bunch achieved after the Crucifixion and Resurrection. And the number of churches still active even today in our so-called Post-Christian society testifies to what they achieved.

The point is surely, not that the first disciples were ready to take on this task, but that Jesus authorised them. He authorised them just as they were. He gave them authority to announce to people that the Kingdom of Heaven was near; to heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. All without taking any money with them, or luggage or spare clothes and shoes, not even a walking stick; having to trust that people they encountered would offer them hospitality and food.

"I am sending you," Jesus said.

It was enough and he was enough. He still is.

February Worship Theme

During February, and into the first week of March, we shall be thinking about mission, and specifically about what Jesus taught his disciples as he sent them out to spread his teaching.

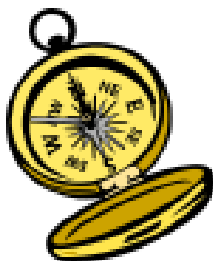
Sunday 5th February: **Luke 4: 14-21.** Jesus' Mission Statement: "This Scripture has come true today before your very eyes!"

Sunday 12th February: **Mark 6: 7-13.** Jesus sends out the twelve apostles.

Sunday 19th February: **Matthew 20: 20-28.** Jesus teaches about serving others.

Sunday 26th February: **John 17: 13-24.** "I am praying not only for these disciples but for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony."

Sunday 5th March: **1 Chronicles 16: 7-24.** David's song of praise. "Let the whole earth sing to the Lord... Tell everyone about the amazing things he does!"



Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to say that Pastor Andrew Jones and the deacons at Avenue Baptist Church have kindly agreed to host the **World Day of Prayer** service this year.

I will let you know about **a date for the planning meeting** shortly and will prepare posters.

A World Day of Prayer service

will be held on

Friday 3rd March 2023 at 7.30pm

at Avenue Baptist Church,

Avenue Road, Beckenham BR3 4RX.

The service has been prepared by the Christian women of **Taiwan** and the theme is

"I have heard about your faith".

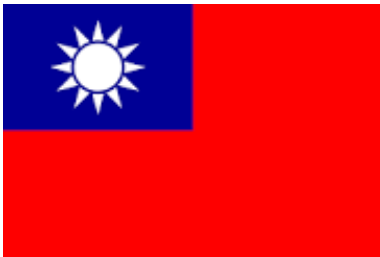
Our sisters in Taiwan are sending us blessings with the service they have prepared for the World Day of Prayer 2023. Taiwan is an island rich in natural resources and culturally diverse. The women of Taiwan share the issues faced geographically, politically and socially and also their hopes for the future. Let us join with them as we give thanks for the beautiful island and people of Taiwan and encourage one another in our faith just as Apostle Paul did in his letters.

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts

of women from all parts of the world, their hopes, concerns and prayers. The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 120 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world - through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in *American Samoa some 38 hours later.

Please come along and join in this service of praise and prayer. All are welcome.

Julie Taylor



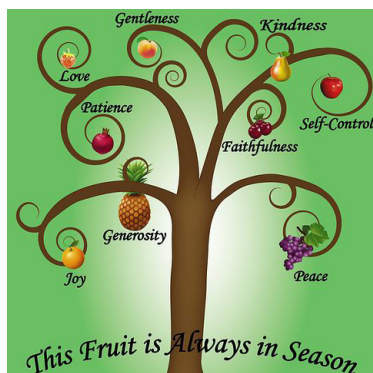
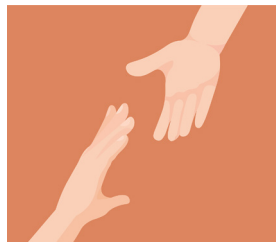
****American Samoa is a little island just east of the Samoan islands - where the 'prayer' started. It is United States territory and where, as Julie says, 'the day finishes'.***

above
The flag of
Taiwan



Lenten Devotions

Last Autumn, our Breaking Ground daily prayer words encouraged us to develop our relationship with God as individuals and as members of the Body of Christ. Lent is a time when we practise some type of extra daily devotion to focus our minds and hearts in preparation for Easter. In previous years we have given out a daily Scripture reading for Lent. This year, we thought we would instead give 40 ideas for prayer.



Lent begins on Wednesday 22nd February. There are 40 ideas listed below: you can either use them as daily focus for prayer during Lent; or you can pick out some for a longer period of devotion. Each of us will probably be drawn more to some than others. Feel free to use them in whatever way you find most helpful.



Temptation

Feeding on the Word

Being tested

Worshipping false ideas

Focusing on God

Keeping your eye on the prize

Being true to oneself

Reaching out

Opening your heart

Using your strengths

Using your weaknesses

Compassion for the displaced

Putting others first

Small acts of kindness

Listening to God

Praying for those facing discrimination

Humility

Renewal

Spiritual nourishment

Serenity

“I am with you always”

Thirsting for Christ

Leaning on God

Courage

Pursuing peace

Your gift from God

Charity

Patience

Generosity

Self-control

Wisdom

Teaching others

Encouragement

Conquering evil

Grace

Loving one another

Rejoicing

Praising

Victory

Transformation

THERE, BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD ...

A year ago such heartbreaking scenes were first played out upon our screens.

Ukraine was on the move.

That babe in arms, the bewildered toddler,

The terrified and troubled teens,

The anguished mothers and the strongly stubborn elderly,

All putting on brave faces at fond farewells.



Were it not for an accident of birth

Each one could have been our infant, our grandchild,

Our daughter or grandparents on the road (or left behind)

Our desperate son or beloved husband,

Condemned to stay and fight.

Deserted streets and empty buildings,

Strangely reminiscent of our oh so recent Lockdowns,

Bear witness not to Covid but to a different crisis.

Plastic bags, berated signs of careless consumers,

Now carry away a lifetime of necessities and memories

As struggling families flee war-torn Kyiv

To seek for safety in new homes far away.

Miles of newsprint moves the horror on,
Bringing me to tears.

A gaunt-faced but beautiful madonna stands gazing at
her husband

Upon whose chest their fretful newborn is gently
cradled.

Despite the dismal underground shelter

The light and the longing on all three faces reflects the
beauty of a Vermeer

Amid the horror of war.

It haunts me stil, that photograph; I pray this little family
have survived the year

And will live to see their country free.

Jenny Froude



An Easter card
made last year -
from crochet work
by Jenny.

The colours of
Ukraine...

2023 Churches Together Lent Groups

For the first time since 2019, Churches Together are planning united Lent Groups on Tuesday evenings during Lent. 28th February to 28th March. All the churches will meet together at St John's Eden Park. There will be a plenary worship session at the beginning and end of each evening; in between we can choose which group to be part of. At the time of writing the groups are

Choral

Art

Eco-Church

A fourth strand is being planned, probably about local churches working together.

Our own **Chris and Lynn McShane** are leading the **Art group**. This does mean that our usual *Tuesday evening Praise* sessions will be suspended from *28th February until after Easter*.

In due course, anyone interested in attending the Lent Groups (previous ones have been well-attended, and therefore a very joyous and encouraging event to be part of) will be invited to sign up to the strand of their choice.

It is wonderful to think we can once again join with other Christians, greet old friends and make new ones!

Pam

Christians against Poverty

We have CAP (Christians against Poverty) in Penge.

It is based at St John's Church.

Douglas, who is still one of our deacons and is visiting us on Sunday, has made CAP one of his two Mayor's Charities. The following article is the press release about his visit to CAP in Bradford and the great work they are doing.



‘Kendal Mayor Visits Centre of Hope’

Kendal Mayor, Councillor Doug Rathbone, joined trustees and volunteers from ‘Kendal and District Debt Centre’ to visit CAP HQ in Bradford this week. Christians Against Poverty started 26 years ago with one man, **John Kirkby** who started the charity from his garage. Today, CAP HQ is still located in Bradford but with now over 400 staff. CAP’s mission is

that there is 'always hope' and the team that visited this week certainly found that in abundance.

Cllr Rathbone was joined by Chair of Trustees, Jonny Gios, Trustee Boyd Gilmore and CAP Money Coach, Di Gilmore. The group enjoyed a humbling tour around Jubilee House, visiting various departments and speaking to members of staff.

One member of staff the group met was 'Debbie', who had been CAP's second person in its history to go debt free some 20 + years ago and eventually becoming one of its trustees. Today Debbie is on the New Enquiries Team answering calls from hundreds of new clients each week. Debbie conveyed to the group how debt had impacted her and what a difference CAP had made to her.

The visit was inspiring and humbling to see what a difference they are making right across the UK. Councillor Rathbone commented...

"Kendal and District Debt Centre celebrate their first year as a charity this week and its fitting that they visit the very organisation they partner with every week. Kendal and District Debt Centre has been working for the past year supporting 17 clients who have needed our supporting with their debt and where they've made a real difference".



Jonny, Chair of Trustees commented " We're delighted to have made a real impact in Kendal this past year, but

we know there are more people we can help. Our visit to CAP HQ this week was great to give Cllr Rathbone an insight to the work that goes on behind the scenes. We're delighted to be one of Cllr Rathbone's Charities this year and pray that we can continue to make a difference in Kendal".

The work that CAP are doing is inspirational and impacting the UK as it operates through Churches and charities like Kendal and District Debt Centre.

Jubilee House, the home of CAP HQ is where hundreds of staff are making a difference to give hope to all those who phone who maybe don't have hope. Soon to be upon us is Blue Monday, where people haven't been paid but bills have come in and the debt of Christmas has built up. This can be a really challenging time especially as we're living in unprecedented cost of living crisis.

Kendal and District Debt Centre encourages those who maybe have debt to pick up the phone and to contact them.

There is always Hope!

There are more photos of this visit on page 16

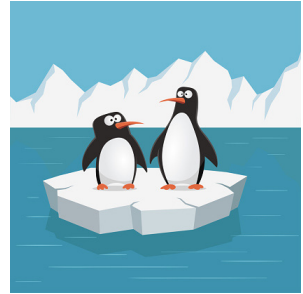
Kendal and District Debt Centre works in partnership with CAP and can be contacted on 0800 328 0006

Australia Day 26th January

Celebrating with Douglas and eating Tim Tams!!
Siobhan is trying to drink her favourite beverage (tea) through the Tim Tam.

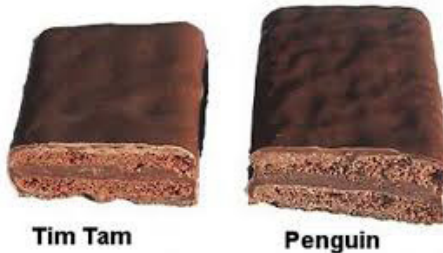
A great Australian tradition.





I have it on good authority that a Tim Tam is like a Penguin - no!

Not the antarctic variety but this



You are supposed to bite the ends off and use it as a straw for a hot drink. Siobhan (above) thought it 'a little impractical'.

Christians **A**gainst **P**overty (article on pages 11-13)



We are still praying for Ukraine



Ukrainian children with their teacher.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/kidsandartforukraine>

If you would like to support this initiative, the link is above. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development EBRD will triple your donation!

A Way of Being Church

Praise God, we have a couple of people who have been coming to PCC for a while and who are interested in church membership. So here are the basics of the Congregational Way of being Church.

The three most basic principles are:

We are a church where Christ is the head, with no external hierarchy.

We are a church based on a covenant relationship with God and with one another, where seeking the mind of Christ is the basis of all that is done.

We are a church where all members are considered equal before God, and all skills and gifting are valued and recognised.*

We welcome people into church membership to have responsibility for all aspects of church life. We hold regular church meetings where through the power of the Holy Spirit we seek the mind of Christ, and everyone is encouraged to contribute. We have a minister who has a specific role of spiritual leadership, preaching and teaching; they are members of the church who are equally subject to the discernment of the church meeting. We worship in a style that is inclusive of the whole church community. We invite all who love Jesus, or who are seeking him, to share communion.*

So an experienced church member should be able to say:

I believe in God and accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.

I have been called by God to be an active member of the church.

I have an ongoing responsibility for the ongoing work of this church.

I attend church meetings, and contribute to discussion, and share ideas.

I regularly attend worship.

I am faithful in Bible reading and prayer and in service.

I take part in Holy Communion.*

*These are extracted from the Congregational Federation booklet, "A Way of Being Church", a copy of which can be found on the table at the back of the church.

If you feel you can at least begin to work towards all it says, then please talk to the Minister or one of the Deacons about asking for church membership. Remember though that the most important thing is your desire to know, love and follow our Lord Jesus Christ. All the rest will follow, and we will help and support you!

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