

# Penge Congregational Church



**May 2021**



## From the Minister

Our Zoom Bible meetings have been going twice a week now for well over a year. A particular joy is the ability to reconnect with church members who have moved away. **Douglas** has been with us most sessions and we sometimes see **Debbie**; **Patricia** managed to join us last week, and **Jack**, bless him, was an occasional visitor.



It has been interesting to see how looking at a different passage each session, twice a week, chosen by someone different each time, should mean each discussion covers disparate topics; and yet actually long running themes have emerged. I suppose you could argue that people are influenced to choose a passage that chimes with the previous session's discussion. And yet, I do believe that the **Holy Spirit** has guided us into ways that build up our lives as individual Christians and as the fellowship at PCC.

One long running strand was persistence: persistence in prayer, persistence in witnessing. Another has been enduring in the face of a secular society that is largely indifferent to belief, and sees it as an irrelevance.

Since Easter we have reflected on the ways in which the Holy Spirit within us prompts us to act when we encounter the response of the world. I was telling the group the other day about an incident when we were

collecting for Christian Aid about 3 years ago. I went to a door in a local road before 7.30pm, and the lady of the house opened the door and gave me a furious hostile earful: she had just put her child to bed and how dare I ring her doorbell! It was so unjust! Here I was doing a good thing, collecting for Christian Aid! And she was being so unreasonable- it was before 7.30, not late, not dark; how was I to know she had a small child? Why did she have a doorbell if she didn't want people to use it?

Over the years of parenthood and also 16 years of working in a secondary school, I have learned to control my temper pretty well, but I admit the red mist descended. I actually opened my mouth to give her an earful back. And then, something spoke within me, I believe it was the Holy Spirit, and it said, "You are a Christian, you are standing here representing a Christian charity, and you may not answer her back."



Judging by her face, she saw the effort I made to calm myself. It did actually take an almost physical effort. But I did it, I took a deep breath and I managed to say that I was sorry for disturbing her, wish her good evening and walk away. Admittedly, as soon as I rejoined the group of collectors, I vented my indignation and rehearsed all the things I had wanted to say in retort, but I don't think God grudged me that!

**The 23rd May is Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit came to the believers in Jerusalem and the church was born. The gift was for everyone who**

believed; but it wasn't given just so they could enjoy it themselves. It was given so that they could use it to witness, to make other disciples, to, literally, spread the Word.

For the past few weeks, we have come back repeatedly **to faith in action**, not just to the need to translate what you believe as a Christian into deeds, into witness, into testimony. **Jesus is the light of the world**; as **disciples** we have received that light from him and we live by it. And yet, it isn't just for us; we have to hold it up high so others can see it and see by it.

This is so important for the future work of our church. Praising God together and worshipping him is vital to our fellowship, but it's only half of what Jesus commissioned us for.

As we think about the gift of the Holy Spirit, let's think and pray about how we can renew our church and grow it. Let's ask ourselves: is a light shining inside a box illuminating its surroundings?



*Pam*



# Polling Day

**Thursday 6th May** is the date for the delayed GLA and Mayoral Elections. As usual, the Kenilworth Hall is being used as a Polling Station.

Can anyone with keys to the building please note:

Covid restrictions, added to the normal electoral security, make it very important that no one should enter the Kenilworth Road end of the building unless you are going to vote, and there is obviously no access to the rest of the building from the Kenilworth Hall. The election staff will be using the Vestry as a rest area. The preschool will be open as usual at the far end of the building; anyone coming in after their hours from the drive must not go through either of the two keypad doors from the lobby.

Thank you to all key holders for helping us comply with electoral and Covid regulations on Polling Day.



Cover photo:

**Barbara Collins** at work in the Church garden: see page 10-11 for close-ups and story!

I have had many lovely comments about the **Easter Poster** on the Church wall. *Ed.*

## May Scripture readings

Since the beginning of the first lockdown, we have put the text of the weekly Scripture readings in the newsletter in full. Partly this was for the benefit of anyone on the mailing list who doesn't own a Bible and partly for one or two regular Sunday worshippers whose eyesight makes it difficult for them to read their Bible.

But now we are back in church and praying hard that we shan't have to stop again; and probably those without Bibles have access to the internet. So, especially now we have a dynamic new editor who is finding all sorts of good things to include each month, we have taken the decision to keep giving you the themes and readings, but not print the Scripture in full.

We had the reading for 2nd May in the April newsletter: it is Mark 6: 45-51, and the theme is **Walk with Jesus on the Water.**



**May includes the Day of Pentecost**, which this year we mark on the 23rd. So we thought we could spend the month focusing on the gifts of the Spirit.

9th May: John 14: 15-29 **Jesus promises the Holy Spirit.**

16th May: 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11 **Spiritual gifts.**

23rd May: Acts 2: 1-21 **The Holy Spirit comes**

30th May: Ephesians 1: 15-23 **A rich and glorious inheritance.**

# **Christian Aid Week**

**10-16 May 2021**

In Kenya, extreme weather is making it harder and harder to survive. For communities fighting the climate crisis, every last drop matters and every last one of us can help them thrive. The coronavirus pandemic has only increased the urgent need for families to access a reliable source of water.

The devastating climate crisis robs people of the water and food they need to live.

Rose walks for six hours to fetch water for her grandchildren. She tries hard to give them the kind of life she remembers from when she was a girl: when the rivers flowed with water and the crops bore fruit. With

Rose and her grandchildren shouldn't have to go hungry. A simple earth dam, built with the help of Christian Aid's partners and your donations, could completely change her life. This Christian Aid Week, you can be one of the hundreds of thousands of our supporters who give, act and pray to stop this climate crisis driving people like Rose to hunger.

From envelope collections to walking 300,000 steps in May, Christian Aid Week brings people together as one community against global poverty and injustice.

This Christian Aid Week (10-16 May), please:

Give generously to help ensure people like Rose fight this climate crisis.

Act as we call on the UK Prime Minister to lead the world with ambitious climate action that will also address inequality.

Pray for a radical change of heart for politicians, and that as a global community we will care for our common home and for people living in poverty. Together we stop this climate crisis.

Join us at [caweek.org](http://caweek.org)

Please go to the back - page 21 to see how you can help!



## Introduction

I claim no credit for what follows. It is a verbatim record of the beginning of a sermon given by Father Paul Francis when he was the rector at St. George's Church in Beckenham. I spoke to him about it and he kindly gave me this copy.

*Ronald Kirby.*

## The Meaning of Words

We can get ourselves in quite a tangle when we use words which mean one thing to us but something completely different to others. The following story illustrates this very well.

There was a certain English lady who wanted to buy a house in a remote village in Switzerland. On her return after viewing she realised that she hadn't seen where the toilet was in the new house so she wrote to the Swiss agents asking about the location of the WC. The agent had little knowledge of English and had no idea what she meant by WC so he asked his local priest to translate. The only meaning for WC the priest could think of was Wesleyan Chapel; so here is the reply the lady received:

"My dear madam,

I take great pleasure in informing you that the WC is situated 9 miles from the property in the centre of a beautiful grove of pine trees surrounded by lovely grounds.

It is capable of holding 229 persons and is open on Sundays and Thursdays only. It may interest you to know that my daughter was married in the WC and it was there that she met her husband. I can remember the rush for seats; there were 10 people to every seat usually occupied by 1.

You will be glad to hear that a good number of people bring their lunch and make a day of it, while those who can afford to go by car arrive just in time. I would recommend that you go on Thursdays when there is an organ accompaniment - the acoustics are excellent and even the most delicate sound can be clearly heard everywhere.

The newest addition is a bell donated by a wealthy benefactor; it rings every time someone enters.

A bazaar is to be held to provide plush seats for all since the people find it long needed. My wife is rather delicate and cannot attend regularly; it is now almost a year since she last went and actually it pains her much not to go more often.

I shall be delighted to reserve the best seat for you where you shall be seen by all.

Hoping to be of some service to you.



Yours faithfully.”

## Farewell to Barbara



**Barbara** has been doing the **church garden** for us every week since about **June 2013**. I can't believe it is so long! Initially this was with **Roy** although in the last year (during lockdown) Barbara has come on her own so that Roy could 'shield' at home and not have to travel.

Barbara took over from **Joyce** who had been looking after the garden so beautifully for many years herself.

I don't think Barbara has missed a week on the job! Sometimes she has come to do the garden in the snow. She will sweep up the snow on the paving stones around the rose bushes and make everything look cared for. Sometimes she comes on bank holidays even if I have suggested she could have the day off. Sometimes the freezing wind is blowing the leaves into the air and dropping them in a thick layer for Barbara to tidy up.

That is determination for you!

And the plants have really benefitted from the pruning and digging.

We have flowers most of the year in all the beds. Barbara and Roy have enjoyed finding abandoned pot

plants (often in the bins in cemeteries) and they have rescued them and rehoused them so that they can grow and be enjoyed by all.

The rose bushes have flourished with colour. The daffodils, tulips, geraniums, elder tree, rosemary bush and many shrubs have grown with all the tender loving care.

Barbara is going to be moving to the **Isle of Sheppey** in the next month to be nearer to **Debbie** and **Shane**. This is a loss to us - but it will be lovely for them to be by the sea and not have as much travelling to do.

I am sure they will all be popping back to check that we are keeping up the good work.

Barbara, be assured that our love and thanks and prayers will go with you.



**Barbara and daughter, Debbie, write:**

It is with sadness that we share the news of the death of our **husband, father, uncle, grandfather and Deacon, Fr Roy Collins** - who ministered at St Luke's Church in Woodside. He passed away peacefully on Sunday, 25th April with his family at his side.



He started his Spiritual Journey at St Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg, South Africa, alongside Revd Margaret Tremeer who served with him for many years. **He was ordained Deacon in 1993.** He brought so much to people through his preaching and pastoral ministry. As well as being a Deacon in South Africa, Revd Roy was, for many years, the **Director of a Rehabilitation Centre for drug addicts and alcoholics, called Genesis.**

Since returning to the UK in 2013 his health deteriorated and suffered many health issues but continued to do his ministry work at St Lukes. Woodside.

Over the last decade, Fr Roy has brought so much to the life of St Luke's - through his preaching and pastoral ministry.

He continued to preach, lead prayers and read the Gospel virtually, all through the disruption during the pandemic.

We were thankful we could spend the last day with him together. What struck us was that he made sure we were all okay. He had no pain, no fear of dying and was happy as he said "I know where I am going".

He will be sorely missed by us all specially by his wife, Barbara; his golden boy Shane and his "Daddys girl" Debbie.

**May he rest in peace and rise in glory.**

# A Letter to my Mother which she never received

Hello Mum,

You have been in that warm earth now for many years. I am almost eighty years now and still I think of you - mostly in the early mornings of winter darkness or when the sun of a summer's day is just rising.

You had very little, your possessions were few and yet you gave me a box full of treasure - the simple things which outweigh by far the hankering after wealth and riches. Your wealth was far, far greater than you probably ever realised. You gave me:-



- Your determination, love and caring as you struggled to maintain a home for us, to pay rent and to feed us on 26 shillings and 4 pence, which was Dad's contribution, being an able-seaman all his 25 years in the Royal Navy! You managed this single-handed in an inventive and loving way.
- You gave us picnics on hillsides, amongst tall grasses, butterflies and bees; long walks, babbling streams, the sound of the sea lapping gently against its wall. You also gave me the safety of Church.
- You passed on to me your ability to manage with little, and yet reminded me to be thankful for what we had.

- You passed on your exuberance for life, your humour and your strength to carry on, always rising in the wake of adversity.
- You also passed on your anxiousness, your fiesty personality, your, sometimes, inability to cope and yet you always found the strength to rise from the depths and shine once again.
- And in that wheelchair you came at the end of your life, your humour and caring never, ever deserted you. What an example - would I ever be able to match that?
- Your caring for others meant that you neglected self as your generosity of spirit took over.

There is much more that I could say, and I wish I could have been equipped to tell you before you died, but these things came to me late in life!

However, I tell you now, hoping that you hear me.

God bless you Mum, we'll speak soon.

With love, Anne



*Anne read the Scripture lesson on Sunday 25th April - beautifully! (Another attribute of her Mother?)*



# Prayers for friends in Myanmar

More than 100 years ago a family from Penge went out to India as missionaries.

**Reginald Lorraine and his wife settled in the North eastern state of India called Mizoram.** They lived with the **Mara people** in the southern part of Mizoram called **Maraland**.

In 2013 **Douglas Rathbone** went to visit Maraland as a Congregational Federation rep with **Richard Pickering** and **Barbara Bridges** (who became the CF President the next year). The Mizoram church is a Congregational Church. Douglas says “One gift I took to give people was a series of our centenary PCC tea towels – they were so happy. Indeed a story I still tell everyone is that it’ll be the only time in my life that when people asked me where I was from, I told them “Penge”, and everyone went “WOW!!” “

Mizoram is right on the border with **Myanmar (formally Burma)**. Myanmar was a democratic country since 2011 after a long history of military rule. On 1st February 2021 there was a violent coup and the military once again seized control.

Douglas is still in touch with friends he met in Mizoram and Myanmar and ***we are all praying for their safety.***

Please pray for brothers and sisters in Myanmar. They say it is looking like a battlefield and they are hearing

gunshots. They are praying for healing and peace and help to overcome the terrible situation.

A brother there writes “Sometimes, God allows us to face some unexpected things, unspeakable things in order to realize more His faithfulness. In some cases it is hard to understand by our human thoughts why, how etc but we wait, patient for His timing!”

God is faithful and hears us as we pray earnestly and persistently.



*I managed to persuade Pam to give us a photo of her Grandson! Pam writes:*

**Teddy** is 6 weeks old on 30th April. How quickly they grow and change! In the past week or so, he has started focusing on things and reacting to them.

**Christina** took this photo of him and the Very Hungry Caterpillar!



# Sheep

When I was in Lancashire back in 2003, looking after a parish in **Accrington** (yes, indeed, home of the famous Accrington Stanley) I had to preach on 'Good Shepherd Sunday'. I was a little embarrassed, looking down at the lads and lasses from a position 'six feet above contradiction', to have to explain that I knew *nothing* about sheep!

As a result, throughout that week, I was taken by various parishioners to get to know about, and meet, many sheep. Wherever I went, it was impressed upon me that 'sheep are *not* stupid' - they are highly intelligent creatures. (I once met a minister who refused to say any verses in the psalms with the words 'we are his people and the *sheep* of his pasture' or similar words - he would not be called a sheep... considering how many sheep appear in the Scriptures... the mind boggles!)



My 'getting to know about sheep' experience ended with a visit to **Lakeland Sheep and Wool Centre at Cockermouth** where I learnt that there are over 60 pure breeds of sheep in Britain as well as numerous cross and half-breeds. At Lakeland I was introduced to 40 sheep. When called in turn, each sheep dashed across the stage and jumped onto her own podium, which displayed her breed. I went home with a bag of freshly sheared wool and a poster showing these beautiful and intelligent sheep.

Talking about sheep, my mind always goes back over the decades to my first months at school. I went at five years old to Rosemead, a little school on Leigham Court Road run by two sisters - a Miss Plumridge and Mrs White. As in every school in those days, the school day began with a hymn and a prayer. Every week we sang 'Loving Shepherd of Thy Sheep' - the repertoire for small children was not very extensive then\* and by the time I left Rosemead, I knew it by heart and I was not a great fan of the hymn!

But I have grown to love the last verse:

Where thou leadest I would go,  
Walking in thy steps below,  
'Till before my Father's throne  
I shall know as I am known.

Jane Elizabeth (or *Eliza*) Leeson wrote many hymns (for adults as well as for children). She lived from 1807 - 1882.

It seems that Loving Shepherd is the most well-known.

\*There are delightful hymns and Christian songs for children nowadays - and they are often sung at weddings, I notice).



*How about writing about a hymn or Christian song which you love or of which you have a special memory?*



Apologies to the Spooner family - the caption accompanying Franca's photo was sent by her daughter, **Julie Spooner**.

(*not Julie Taylor* - got my Julies in a tangle!)

## **Christian Aid Week**

**10-16 May 2021**

**We will be collecting again this year and see if we can beat our last total.** Are you able to drop envelopes into houses in your road? The envelopes are to invite people to contribute via our link or drop off to the address written on the envelope. We have an e-envelope for PCC so that we can see how much we bring in. The link for those of you who are reading the newsletter online is: <https://envelope.christianaid.org.uk/envelope/penge-congregational-church?channel=copy>

Or drop your gift at 3 Kenilworth Road, SE20 7QG and we will add it to our total.

**Website:**

[www.pccweb.co.uk](http://www.pccweb.co.uk)



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

[pamjowen@hotmail.com](mailto:pamjowen@hotmail.com)

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

[pcclettings@outlook.com](mailto:pcclettings@outlook.com)

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**Deacons** at the moment are

**Jannett Ashley**

**Douglas Rathbone**

**Chris Parker**

**Lynn McShane** (treasurer)

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