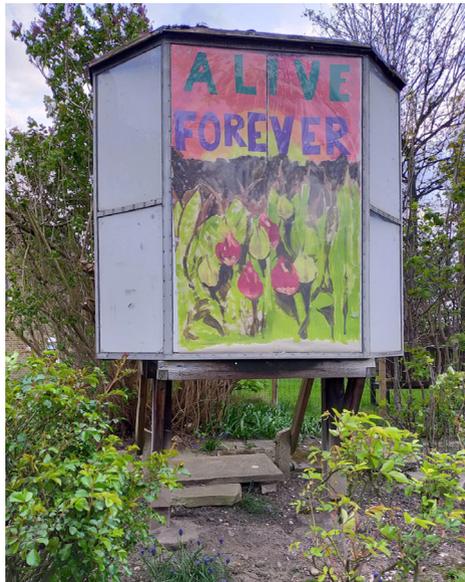


Penge Congregational Church

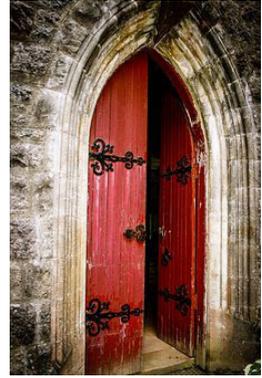


May 2022



From the Minister

In our Sunday evening Zoom Bible Studies (which all are welcome to join!), we seem to talk a great deal about the difficulties of being, as a Christian, a minority in a sea of unbelief. As it always does, reading the Bible brings us a new perspective on this.



In the Old Testament, we read the sorry saga of the people of Israel repeatedly failing to be faithful to God: many, including their kings, lived in ways that didn't honour God or follow his Law; some found it easier to worship the pagan gods of their Canaanite neighbours rather than the one true God. And so eventually, God punished the people through the great empires that surrounded Israel and Judah, and the leaders and high status Jews were taken into exile. The prophet Jeremiah, who had prophesied this doom in vain, wrote a letter from Jerusalem to the elders, priests and prophets who had been carried off to Babylon. In it he told them how they should conduct themselves in exile. They were to live their lives- build homes, grow crops, marry and have children; they were to work and for the peace and prosperity of Babylon. BUT they were to remember that God would one day come for them and restore them, that they were still God's people. He had made them a promise and they were to trust him to keep it. So, while they were to live their lives *in* Babylon, they were to be faithful to God and not listen to the

prophets among them who would try to lure them away from him. “For I know the plans I have for you’, says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen.’”

Today, even as we celebrate the victory of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection that leads us to new life in him, it is all too easy to get distracted by those around us who see religion as an irrelevance. When dreadful things happen in the world- the war in Ukraine and the terrible loss of innocent lives is a good example- we may even ask, “Where is God in all this?” However, we have God’s promise that those who belong to him will always find him if they seek with all their hearts! We have that assurance that, no matter how long we may feel we are exiles in an alien land, God is with us and he will keep his promises. If you need some encouragement, read Jeremiah 31 and put your trust in God who always keeps his promises!

Pam



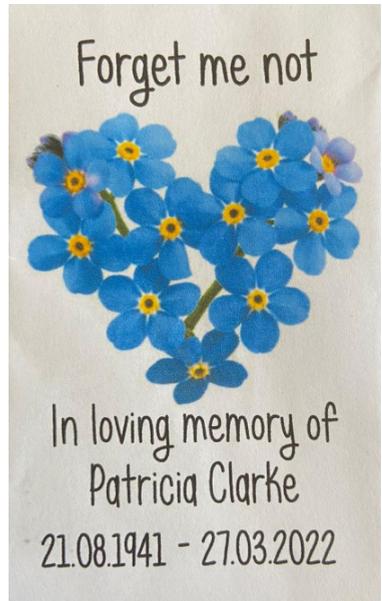
Pat Clarke

On 21st April, we laid Pat to rest with her beloved Bill and with their son Clive who passed away in the 1980s aged 10. It was slightly less than 2 years since Bill's funeral, towards the end of the first Covid lockdown. On that occasion we were restricted to 15 mourners and the entire service had to take place at the graveside. Two of Bill's siblings, who had travelled some distance, had to just turn round and go back home afterwards. It was a good funeral but not what Pat had wanted.

So Pat's daughters, Lorna and Sue, were determined that Pat's own funeral would make up for it. Lorna produced the list of four hymns Pat had noted down, with the hand written annotation that only two should be sung. We settled for "Lord of all hopefulness" and "The King of love my Shepherd is"; and for good measure used "Lord of the Dance" as the exit music. The fourth choice had been "Brother, sister let me serve you",

which would have been an excellent reflection on Pat's attitude to life, but we decided fewer people would know that one.

At Bill's funeral, Pat had chosen as the reading 1 Corinthians 13, and so we read it at hers too. As she



had at her grandfather's funeral, granddaughter Avril gave the eulogy, a very moving tribute, beautifully written and beautifully delivered. Then we made our way to the other end of the cemetery and, in the lovely spring sunshine, united Pat's mortal remains with those of Bill and Clive. Five of the contingent from the church were able to go on to the wake, where, along with family and other friends, we spent time remembering Pat. We remembered most of all her unassuming kindness and the way she was always more interested in others than in talking about herself. In remembering Pat, we talked also of Bill, of the times he had helped out with chores in the church building but more of the kindnesses he had done for people.



As people began to leave, Lorna produced a little box and handed each of us a packet of Forget-Me-Not seeds, which we are invited to plant in memory of Pat. We hope to put some in the church garden: not that we are in danger of forgetting Pat or Bill...

Patricia Ann Clarke, 21st August 1941-27th March 2022

William James Clarke, 20th October 1939-20th April 2020



from L to R: Jean, Rosemarie, Pat and Miriam

Pat and Miriam knew each other from the age of fifteen when they left school and went to work at the same place!





Good Friday's Taize Service



May readings

These are the themes we shall be following in our May services. We will be looking at some of the prayers, mostly in the Old Testament, known as Songs.

When we think of Biblical songs, we tend to remember the Psalms, the Song Book of Israel, but there are plenty of others. Some later became Jewish liturgies; others fulfilled the same sort of function as the sung narratives of the mediaeval minstrels, which told the tale of great events in a time before newspapers etc.

All are rich passages of Scripture - songs of thanksgiving or praise; songs that illuminate the character of God - that will I hope help us to enrich our own prayer lives.

1st May The Song of Moses and Miriam.

Exodus 15: 1-18

8th May The Song of Moses.

Deuteronomy 31: 30-32:14.

15th May Hannah's Song.

1 Samuel 2: 1-10.

22nd May David's Song of Thanksgiving.

1 Chronicles 16: 8-31

29th May Zechariah's Song. St Luke 1: 67-80.

Seeds of Hope and Faith Transfiguration



On the Fifth Sunday of Lent, we enjoyed a very good talk on botany and the art of indoor gardening. It was given by Chris Mc under an inspiring drawing of a sunflower and its seed. All present planted seeds of various kinds. Within days, we witnessed transformation!





Graduation Ceremony



Joy-filled photo of **Shanice Ashley**, 4th. April 2022., after her graduation.

She actually received her degree last year but the dreaded virus put paid to large gatherings.

Shanice is enjoying her work as a teacher of year 3 at Lonesome Primary School in Croydon. We wish her every success and joy in her teaching career.

Paradise Flycatcher - out of Africa

Rainbow's End, Vaalwater, Northern Province, RSA

Mid - 1993 - by Cherryl Andersen

As we drove through the tall silver gates of Rainbow's End that Friday afternoon, I withdrew into myself. I was with friends - Jane and Di, Jenny and Ali - but they'd been here before and were looking forward to seeing Ros. For me it was the first time and I felt shy as Jane parked under the shady trees near the house and I saw the owner coming to meet us.

I hung back as the rest tumbled out of the car into her wide open arms, but Ros soon came over, welcoming me by name! Thinking back, it was natural that she should have been able to work out who I was, but at the time I was staggered and felt so treasured.



We were soon settled in our cottages and relaxing with cool drinks on the patio as the sun set over the Waterberg. The peace was almost tangible after the continual cacophony of city traffic which was our norm.

Saturday breakfast in the oval room was a sight to behold and even better to eat!

Everything at Rainbow's End was prepared with utmost care and love, from the lace-edged needlework which surrounded us to the fruit juice, porridge, eggs bacon and all the trimmings which replenished us. Before long Jenny was stretched out

Continued on page 20 and 21...

God to the Rescue?

Some years ago, there were some terrible floods in California and the rescue services were stretched to the limit. One man managed to escape the floods by sliming to the top of a street lamp, where he sat awaiting rescue.

A coastguard launch passed by and offered to take him on board, but the man declined and shouted back: “God has promised to save me!”

A man in a rubber dinghy came by, but he got the same response.

The waters still rose, and a rescue helicopter hovered overhead, and a crewman was winched down to urge the man to strap himself into the rescue harness, but, once again, the man shouted that he was trusting in God, who had promised to save him.

A short time later the waters rose above the lamppost and tragically, the man was drowned. He found himself in heaven and he complained bitterly to God, “I thought that you promised to save me!” God replied, “I don’t understand it! I sent you two boats and a helicopter.”





organ

recitals

**Penge Congregational Church
during the Penge Festival**

Tuesday 14 June 7.30pm, and Saturday 25 June 4pm.
Southwark & South London Society of Organists

Is Hell *Exothermic* or *Endothermic*?

The following is an actual question given on a University of Washington mid-term Chemistry exam.

The answer by one student was so 'profound' that the professor shared it with colleagues, via the Internet, which is, of course, why we now have the pleasure of enjoying it as well.

Bonus Question: Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)?

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law *that gas cools when it expands and gets hotter when it is compressed*, or some variant of that.

One student, however, wrote the following:

Firstly, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So we need to know the rate at which souls are moving into Hell and the rate at which they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving.

As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today. Most of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell.

Since there is more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell.

With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand proportionally as souls are added.

This gives two possibilities:

1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.
2. If Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So, which is it?

If we accept the postulate given to me by Teresa during my Freshman year that, "it will be a cold day in Hell before I allow you to kiss me" and take into account that I did so last night, then the second possibility must be true. Thus, I am sure that Hell is exothermic and has already frozen over:

The corollary of this theory is that since Hell has frozen over, it follows that it is not expecting any more souls and is therefore, extinct... leaving only Heaven.

(The student received an "A")

A little bit of nature by Marissa Tree

I have spent virtually every day at the Wetlands in Merton Hall Park, watching and photographing a lovely moorhen family throughout the Spring. It has been fascinating watching their development from tiny jet-black chicks, trotting around in the bright green algae, in the shallower parts of the Wetlands, then settling in the sun for a bit and seeing them stand up wearing a green 'fringe' around their tummies!

Now they are juveniles, and a beautiful combination of rich chocolate brown wings, tipped with black, and dark grey to black plump bodies.

I have loved watching their antics on the pond and in the mud beneath the reeds at the water's edge.

They gradually gained confidence to fly up onto the main viewing platform, and come within a couple of feet of me, becoming excellent 'life models' for me to photo. It has been a privilege and life affirming experience, to spend so much time in the company of this delightful family, sharing their dramas and the simple joys of their lives.

I have also had the pleasure of exploring the park through the seasons. It was originally owned by the Garth family and run as a school for young gentlemen; then it was sold to a 'Tobacco and Snuff' merchant, Gilliat Hatfield (1827-1906). The snuff mill buildings are still standing and can be viewed by the public. The Hall

became a military hospital during World War 1. Gilliat's son, Gilliat Edward Hatfield (1864-1941) left the estate to the National Trust when he died, having no heirs to pass it on to.

In the 1990's certain changes occurred, allowing the National Trust to re-purpose the original estate buildings into businesses, thus financing the up-keep of the beautiful grounds. There is a cafe and a good second-hand bookshop within the old stable block; another cafe is situated where the kitchen garden used to be, and there is an extremely good Garden Centre and Gift Shop also on the site.

It is well-worth makingg a visit to Merton Hall Park to immerse yourself in the history and beauty of the Park. One can view the Hall at a distance and it is now used as a wedding venue.

The staff in the Park, cafes, Garden Centre and Gift Shop are very helpful and willing to impart their knowledge to those who are interested.



St George's Day Quiz



1. St George is one of the so-called "Fourteen Holy Helpers". Name four more of the "Fourteen Holy Helpers"
2. What have both William Shakespeare and Rupert Brooke, in common, apart from literature?
3. Which of the following is St George NOT the Patron saint of a) Freemasons b) Scouts c) Athletes
4. True or false? The red cross of the flag of St George represents martyrdom.
5. Plus or minus one hundred years, when did St George die?
6. How was he executed?
7. Which group of people brought the story of St George and the Dragon to western Europe?
8. In which modern day country did the legend of St George and the Dragon supposedly take place?



9. Why is St George's Day celebrated on 6th May in Georgia, one of the many countries that hold him as their patron saint?
10. In which country was St George's born.
11. On what day does England celebrate our Patron Saint?

View from the top of our Tower



Just for fun - Famous Last Words

What does this button do?

Are you sure the power is off?

I wonder where the mummy lion is?

Watch! I've seen this done on TV

Nice doggie.

I can do that with my eyes closed.

The 'supposedly true' last words

of a famous clergyman were

"I smell burnng."

continued from page 11 *Paradise Flycatcher*

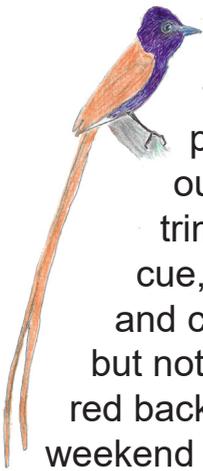
on the grass by the mini-pool, reading a book while Di sunbathed. Jane practised her golf swings while

Ali and I strolled around the garden, exclaiming at the kaleidoscope of colour and beauty.

Relaxed and energised, we all went for a long walk through the veld. Cattle droppings were a hive of activity for dung beetles and bright yellow butterflies, but the heat eventually turned us back for a refreshing dip in the pool. Late afternoon, we snuggled together under a blanket on the back of an open bakkie for a windy drive

along the district's **game farm fences** to stare at rhino, giraffe and buck.

Since we all sang in our own church choir, Ros invited us to join St John the Baptist's Choir on Sunday morning. Vaalwater's Anglican church is the smallest of the typical stone buildings Sir Herbert Baker designed. It seats only 50 but stuffiness is no problem. The windows can be lifted out completely, allowing the slightest of breezes to blow through. Everyone packed in and joyfully sang, worshipping God like a choir of angels in paradise!



Back at Rainbow's End, lunch under a huge shady tree was a delight of delicate flavours such as I'd never dreamed possible. While clearing away, Ros pointed out a **Paradise Flycatcher's nest**, a lichen-trimmed thimble in the fork of a tree. As if on cue, the pert bird arrived, its purple-black head and chest soon camouflaging it in the shadows, but not before I'd seen its resplendent orange-red back and long tail. This final touch made the weekend a glimpse of paradise for me.

How can heaven hold any uncertainties now? God has given me a preview of His welcome, His peace, love and joy. What's more He knows how much I treasure the beauty of His creation.

Website:

www.pccweb.co.uk



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

Pam Owen on:

pamjowen@hotmail.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

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Douglas Rathbone

Chris Parker

Lynn McShane (treasurer)

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