

# **Penge Congregational Church**



**October 2020**



## An initiative of Hope Together

We are asked to pray where we are, that God will give us opportunities to witness to Christ, at 8.20pm (20.20 hours) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month, for 20 minutes.

The Prayer for Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020:

Read John 7: 37, "On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, 'If you are thirsty, come to me!'"

And pray:

Lord Jesus, we bring to you today all those who are feeling far from you, whether through choice or life circumstances. We pray that you will bring people alongside them to bring comfort and give them the courage to come to you for help.



*Pray ... that God  
will give many  
opportunities to  
speak about Christ.*

**Colossians 4:3**



## **From the Minister**

I write in the week when daily Covid cases are rising at an alarming rate, and we have had broadcasts from both the Prime Minister and the scientists. Both the PM and the Chief Medical officer addressed the attitude expressed by some people that our human rights entitle us to live as we wish and take the risks we want to. Professor Whitty pointed out that, with this pandemic, the risks are not just ours to take: if we become infected, we are almost inevitably going to pass the infection on. And as the PM said, one person's mild cough is another person's death knell. The point being that we are social beings, we don't live solitary lives in our own exclusive territories and we are therefore responsible not just for ourselves but for those around us.

Jesus recognises that. He summed up his Father's commandments as "Love the Lord your God ... and love your neighbours as yourself." When his disciples asked him to teach them to pray, he didn't start off the Lord's Prayer with "My Father", he said, "Our Father..." He commissioned Peter to be the foundation stone of the church. The apostles weren't to convert individuals, they were to found a church, and that church, comprising of Christians brought together, was to be the Body of Christ on earth. St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says "We are all one body, we have the same Spirit and we have all been called to the same glorious future."

The Gospels teach us the message Jesus left for us, the template of how we are to live. He didn't say we are all to sit all day and pray, and attend to our individual spiritual lives. Rather he taught us that we are to work for those principles of social justice that he laid out during his ministry. The teaching we have chosen this year for our Harvest message is from John 15, Jesus the true vine. "I am the vine; you are the branches.

Those who remain in me will produce much fruit ... My true disciples produce much fruit."

Some years ago now, probably even more than I think, for a Harvest Festival service, we made a vine. The roots were at the communion table to signify that the vine was rooted in God. The stem stretched along the aisle, through the gathered fellowship, and the branches spread out at the back of the church, nearest to the outside world and the community. When the time came to bring up Harvest gifts, they were laid at the back of the church at the end of the branches of the vine. Because the true disciples of Jesus produce much fruit, and that fruit is the joyful actions of his followers living out his teachings; that fruit is the Body of Christ working for the good of our neighbours, whom we are to love as ourselves.

In the passage about the true vine, Jesus goes on to say this, "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love... I have told you this so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!"

Even in this awful time of pandemic, we can be the Body of Christ. We can witness for Christ. We can do our best to love our neighbours. Even when a virus dominates our society, we can do the work of the Kingdom of God, so that, as Paul says, "the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."

**Pam**

**Following our socials in August and September, we will meet virtually at 7pm on 9<sup>th</sup> October, when Lynn promises us an online Scavenger Hunt!!! If you haven't used Zoom before, simply Google Zoom, and opt to Join a Meeting. Zoom ID 597 482 5851. Password 304 428.**

## **Harvest Festival 4<sup>th</sup> October**

Although we can now meet on Sundays for small worship services, we can't sadly hold a Harvest celebration service this year. However, we know that the call on food banks is greater than ever with so many people losing their jobs and having to live on reduced incomes. We would very much still like to collect food to donate to Living Well at Holy Trinity, and have worked out a way to do this safely, by leaving donated goods for 72 hours before packing them and transporting.

We would ask our groups to collect items of food and toiletries. You can still do so after Harvest weekend: we will be happy to take goods to Holy Trinity at any time. Or else, if you shop in Penge Sainsbury's, you can donate goods via the box behind the checkouts labelled "Living Well."

Items most urgently needed are:

Rice

Tinned veg including baked beans

Tinned meat

Tinned tomatoes

(tins with ring-pulls if possible)

Mash

UHT milk

Toiletries such as shower gel and shaving foam.

Any Harvest gifts of money will be donated online to the Living Well Covid appeal, which helps those in need pay for gas bills etc.

## **Autumn Worship theme**

Our worship theme for the weeks from 6<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> November is Unity/Harmony. It is planned that this will lead us into Remembrance with a theme of Reconciliation.

The theme arose out of a Zoom reflection on Psalm 133:

How wonderful and pleasant it is  
when brothers live together in harmony!

<sup>2</sup>For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil  
that was poured over Aaron's head,  
that ran down his beard  
and onto the border of his robe.

<sup>3</sup>Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon  
that falls on the mountains of Zion.

And there the Lord has pronounced his blessing,  
even life everlasting.

So our readings on the theme for October are:

### 4<sup>th</sup> October (Harvest) John 15: 1-8 (NLT)

15 "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. 5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be

granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

*Reflect: Look at the image on the front of the Newsletter, and reflect on what it means and how it makes you feel.*

11<sup>th</sup> October. Song of Songs 2: 3-13(NLT)

3 Like the finest apple tree in the orchard  
is my lover among other young men.

I sit in his delightful shade  
and taste his delicious fruit.

4 He escorts me to the banquet hall;  
it's obvious how much he loves me.

5 Strengthen me with raisin cakes,  
refresh me with apples,  
for I am weak with love.

6 His left arm is under my head,  
and his right arm embraces me.

7 Promise me, O women of Jerusalem,  
by the gazelles and wild deer,  
not to awaken love until the time is right.

8 Ah, I hear my lover coming!  
He is leaping over the mountains,  
bounding over the hills.

9 My lover is like a swift gazelle  
or a young stag.

Look, there he is behind the wall,  
looking through the window,  
peering into the room.

10 My lover said to me, "Rise up, my darling!  
Come away with me, my fair one!

11 Look, the winter is past,  
and the rains are over and gone.

12 The flowers are springing up,  
the season of singing birds has come,  
and the cooing of turtledoves fills the air.

13 The fig trees are forming young fruit,



and the fragrant grapevines are blossoming.  
Rise up, my darling! Come away with me, my fair one!"

*Reflect: The Song of Songs is a dialogue between a young man and a young woman, a celebration of sexual love. It bears witness that God has graciously provided his people with the good gifts of sexuality and intimate love. He loves us body and soul.*

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October. Colossians 3: 12-17 (NLT)

12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. 16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. 17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

*Reflect: Just as Christ is one, there can only be one body of Christ. Allegiance to Jesus as Lord must transcend differences and will result in harmonious relationships.*

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October. Acts 10: 9-20; 34-48 (NLT)

<sup>9</sup>The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, <sup>10</sup>and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup>He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four

corners. <sup>12</sup> In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. <sup>13</sup> Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat them."

<sup>14</sup> "No, Lord," Peter declared. "I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean." <sup>15</sup> But the voice spoke again: "Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean." <sup>16</sup> The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven. <sup>17</sup> Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house. Standing outside the gate, <sup>18</sup> they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there. <sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, "Three men have come looking for you. <sup>20</sup> Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don't worry, for I have sent them."

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favouritism. <sup>35</sup> In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. <sup>36</sup> This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism. <sup>38</sup> And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup> "And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> He is the one all the prophets

testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.”

<sup>44</sup> Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. <sup>45</sup> The Jewish believers<sup>[c]</sup> who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, <sup>47</sup> “Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” <sup>48</sup> So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days.

*Reflect: Here again we have the message that the Gospel is for everyone. The vision, with its message that nothing can be unclean if God has made it clean, helps Peter to understand this. As Peter talks to the Gentiles sent by Cornelius, the Holy Spirit falls on them, and his Jewish companions understand too that the gift is for all.*



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