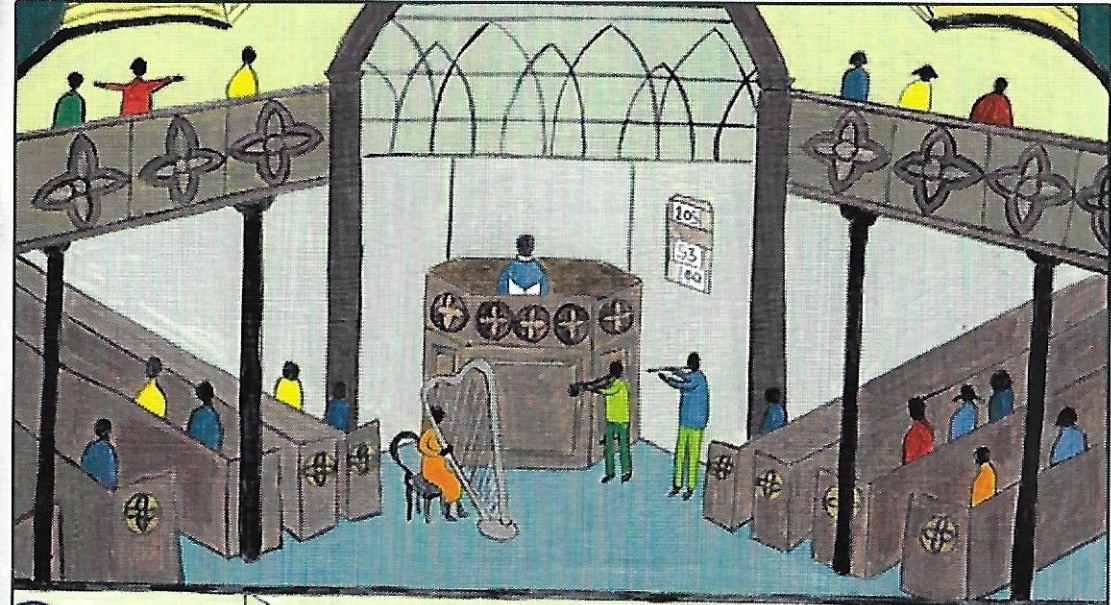


HEATH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH



NEWSLETTER

Issue # 1030

Feb - March 2016

SECRETARY'S LETTER

Happy news that Lydia and John Baker have a baby daughter (no name as yet), born in early January. Marie Isaacs spent most of Christmas and half of January in hospital but is back home now.

Amongst the many good Christmas events were the Advent Service led by Ewan King, with the Heath Street Choir (Emily Gray, choir mistress and conductor) performing Britten's Rejoice in the Lamb; and the Contact Club's Christmas dinner made and served by the regular team of volunteers from St Mary's RC Church and Heath Street and with support (including boxes of chocolates for all guests) from St John at Hampstead too. We had an enjoyable church lunch one Sunday, in the vestry, with delicious food made for us in the new kitchen.

It is very nice to be able to say that we have had no builders in the church since Christmas. Kitchen and other basement works are complete (and paid for), upstairs work in the vestibule done and dusted. Inevitably we have plans for more and we have had an "access audit" done, i.e. checking what we need to do in addition to installing a lift to make the building user-friendly for disabled people and anyone with mobility difficulties or with

prams and buggies. We have detailed plans for the lift but we need to plan and cost how we help people avoid the front steps, get rid of the small steps around the pews, and many other conundrums. To do all this will mean fundraising: we cannot afford it all from our own resources but there isn't much point in doing some of it and not all. We hope we may be able to ask City Bridge Trust for help towards it as they have a programme to help make London's buildings accessible, but any other ideas will be most welcome. We should know soon the total sum we need.

Edward Humphreys is keen that we know the central heating was serviced in January - and he is right that this one of the important but under-valued activities we need to organise. With Robin Thorne in the lead, he and Ewan are beaver- ing away on our fire safety requirements. They are working their way through the 96 small and large items we were advised to deal with and Robin has drawn up an emergency plan, and will be training Sunday regulars to know what to do if the alarm sounds.

With love and best wishes,

Gaynor

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MINISTER'S LETTER

Baptist church polity and the concept of the church #1

I'm pleased to be writing the minister's letter for the second edition of our new-style church newsletter. Every time I look at the new design I find myself smiling with renewed gratitude to Debbie George, Micah Purnell and John Baker - to the former for the painting of the image on the front, to the latter for taking on the fiddly job of getting the newsletter in order, and to Micah for the design templates. What with all the faff of editing and preparation, last time round I ran out of time to contribute anything of my own. So now I want to take the opportunity our "new start" provides to write about a topic to which I've been giving a lot of thought in recent months. Namely what it means for us at Heath Street to call ourselves a Christian congregation, and a Baptist church.

Having made several starts to getting my thoughts on this subject together, I had begun to fear that I wouldn't be able to

write anything coherent in time. Fortunately everything came into focus last Saturday afternoon, on my first trip to the Emirates, where I saw Arsenal make their way into the fifth round of the FA cup - of which more later.

For this edition I'd like to concentrate on the 'ourselves' side of that question, which means leaving for another time the central terms 'congregation' and 'church' - and for even later the vexed matter of 'Baptist identity'. However, I can't entirely ignore the word Baptist this time round, if only because Baptist ecclesiastical polity has so strong an effect on what it means for us to be a congregation.

If we were an Anglican church, for example, our theoretical starting point would be that everyone in the parish would belong to our congregation (if I've understood the principle right!). That might sound very hypothetical, but in fact it really does have some 'cash value', even in modern British society, in the way people relate to their local parish church.

In turning up for hatching, matching and dispatching, people who had never previously darkened

the church doors have the right to feel that they are, in some sense, 'coming home'. Whereas for us, this most certainly doesn't apply. If you come into Heath Street for the first time, you are highly unlikely to feel that this is 'your church': indeed, the chances are that, unless you have a background in chapel worship or some other form of Evangelical Christianity, you'll have only the vaguest of ideas about what Baptists believe, what a Baptist congregation might be, and how one goes about becoming part of one (never mind why one might want to).

But if newcomers are likely to be unsure about just what constitutes a Baptist congregation, are we regulars really any clearer?

For example, I wonder if it is necessary to have undergone believer's Baptism to belong to the congregation at Heath Street? Do you have to be an official "member" whose name is duly inscribed in the roll of members? Must one receive holy communion (and if so how regularly)? Or do you perhaps have to have received believer's Baptism by full immersion, or attend Sunday worship (how often?), or subscribe to a certain set of theological beliefs (which

ones?)? And so on...

Only a generation ago, the denizens of Heath Street might well have given ringing yeses to all these questions and more, and boldly gone on to set a definite figure to the minimum permissible attendance at communion! But not today. And while I'm generally the first to admit a preference for the halcyon days of yore, rigid distinctions between 'inside' and 'out' are a bygone that I'm not keen on reviving. That's because, even in a small church like Heath Street, for each of the criteria I mentioned above, I can think of someone who in my view indisputably is a member of our congregation, but who would definitely not be, if any of them were really and truly obligatory.

But if we deny that these criteria are gate-keepers, is that to suggest that they are entirely devoid of significance? And if we're right to deny that they are gate-keepers does that mean that really there are no hard and fast distinctions between who belongs and who doesn't?

In my view, Believer's Baptism, membership, holy communion, attendance at worship, and subscribing to theological tenets

are by no mean devoid of of significance. But that significance is not a matter of deciding who belongs and who doesn't.

And it's that question - who belongs and who doesn't - to which I found an answer on my recent visit to the Emirates. Burnley won't be winning the cup this season as was only to be expected when they drew Arsenal in the fourth round. But contrary to the expectation of at least some Arsenal fans (e.g. the ones who had kindly invited me and Frida along to the game!) there was no "thrashing" that afternoon. Despite the disparity in status between the two teams Burnley didn't lose by much. In fact, at the 60-minute mark, things could have gone either way. Now, when it came to attacking flair, or midfield guile, the visitors may have been no match for the Premiership high-fliers, but what Burnley did have was a very tight formation and a disciplined game-plan, one they didn't abandon even when they went behind, and one which saw them through a game that could easily have turned into a debacle. That's what allowed them to go home with their heads held high.

Burnley played a 4-3-3 formation, and as we looked down from the Himalayan heights of the North Bank there was a kind of geometrical 'po-

etry in motion' to the way defence, midfield and attack moved back and forth, always flowing and ebbing in three rigidly maintained parallel lines.

A good footballer needs to be able to improvise, to meet a unique situation with an unforeseen, unplanned response. But he or she also need to be able to stick to what's been agreed on beforehand. For the player on the pitch, what philosophers call the 'exercise of judgement' (what fans call not being a *@!***), is all about knowing the difference between the risk that has to be taken, the exceptional opportunity just too good to be overlooked, and a foolish temptation to abandon one's proper post for no good reason.

The same holds for the Christian church and the individual congregations. The church is all one team, but it's good for me to have my post, my place 'my station and its duties'. And it makes sense for the individual congregations to which God has entrusted his mission to maintain a certain separation. That separation can't be absolute, or anything like it. We'll all go up for corners together, to continue the analogy, or come back to But the ability to move in formation is integral to success. So if

I look at friends who have clear commitments to other congregations, I'm not tempted to wonder if they belong to Heath Street: not even if said friends worship with us from time to time, or even fairly frequently. The heavenly equivalent of Arsene Wenger has assigned them their role, at least for the time being!

But that, I think, is the only reason to make any sort of strong division between who belongs to our congregation and who doesn't. And of course it tells us nothing about the person whose ecclesiastical commitment is unclear. Where, then, are we left with respect to that individual on the edge, that person about whom we can't help wondering whether or not they belong? I'd suggest that the situation of this person presents us with a grave danger that we make the mistake - a very human one - of thinking that certainty is more sacred than uncertainty. It isn't, and that's why in this case, our desire for a criterion to bring clarity and definite facts to an uncertain situation is one against which we should be on our guard. It's imperative that some questions not be answered, but are actions, when real life faces us with the question of who belongs at Heath Street? And would our parables of word and deed have anything in common with the

story Jesus told in reponse to the anxious question of a well-meaning lawyer: Who is my neighbour? ?

Ewan

P R A Y E R & C O N T E M P L A T I O N L I S T

January 31st - February 6th Psalm 118

- (Jan) 31st Yet to come the distant Close'
 (Feb) 1st Marie Isaacs
 2nd Beryl Doswett
 3rd John Baker
 4th Onome Okunlola
 5th 'He did not say: 'You will not be troubled,
 6th you will not be belaboured,

February 7th - 13th Isaiah 40.21-31

- 7th you will not be disquieted',
 8th but he said: 'You will not be overcome'.
 9th Heini King
 10th For the London Baptist Association
 11th HM
 12th 'I saw that the love in him which he has for
 our souls was so strong
 13th that he willingly chose suffering with a great
 desire, and suffered it meekly with a great joy.'

February 14th - 20th Genesis 9.8-17

- 14th Hildegard Williams
 15th For the life and ministry of the Parish church
 16th 'All the Trinity worked in Christ's Passion
 17th but only the Virgin's son suffered,
 18th in which all the blessed Trinity rejoice.'
 19th John Walsh
 20th Susan Le Quesne
 30th 'He is Omega, of all things
 31st Yet to come the distant Close'

February 21st - 27th Genesis 17.1-7, 15, 16

- 21st For all who attend the Contact Club
 22nd Tom Brandt
 23rd For all who perform at & attend the lunchtime recitals
 24th 'the union in him of the divinity gave strength to his
 humanity to suffer more than all men could.'
 25th Judith Peak
 26th Edward Humphreys
 27th Annie Fang

February 28th - March 5th Exodus 20.1-17

- 28th For our worshipping community
 29th For the Baptist Union of Great Britain
 (Mar) 1st 'And he suffered for the sins of every one will be
 saved;
 2nd and he saw and he sorrowed for every one's sorrow,
 desolation and anguish, in his compassion'
 3rd The Okunlola children
 4th Sharon Williams
 5th For the life and ministry of Christ Church, Hampstead

March 6th - 12th Numbers 21.4-9

- 6th For his Passion appeared to me most vividly in his
 blessed face
 7th Joachim King
 8th David & Eleanor Neil
 9th Euan McLeod
 10th Margaret Smith

March 13th - 19th

Jeremiah 31.31-34

13th 'contempt, foul spitting, buffeting, and many
14th Thaddeus King long-drawn pains'
15th Ethan McLeod
16th Nomsa
17th For all sing in our Community Choir
18th Gaynor Humphreys
19th 'Suddenly, as I looked at the same cross,
he changed to an appearance of joy.'

March 20th - 26th

Mark 11.1-11

20th Palm Sunday 'The change in his blessed countenance
changed mine,
21st and I was as glad and joyful as I could possibly be.'
22nd Frida King
23rd Robin Thorne
24th Andrea MacEachan
25th Theresa Thom
26th 'Then our good Lord put a question to me: "Are
you well satisfied that I suffered for you?"'

March 27th - April 2nd

Genesis 1.1 - 2.4a

27th Then Jesus our good Lord said: "If you are satisfied,
28th Lydia Baker I am satisfied.
29th For children, parents & carers who attend O.T.Nursery
30th Nesa Thorne
31st Susan Brandt
1st 'It is a joy, a bliss, an endless delight to me that
ever I suffered my Passion for you;
2nd and if I could suffer more, I would suffer more'

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Theresa Thom is kindly getting to grips with the church archives, getting them organised and safely stored and making a note of what records we hold. One document that came to light is the report from the Minister and Deacons in 1964 which records their decision to let the "Lecture Hall Wing", i.e. our next door building, for 21 years. They noted that the founders of the church left us a great building but deliberately did not build an endowment to help future generations with maintenance and repair: they never envisaged a time when Hampstead people would be mainly not churchgoers. Our 1964 forebears, however, saw this trend emerging and it seems that since the 1920s the children of Heath Street members had tended to move further out when they married, and inflation since the war had ruined the value of the weekly collection. From 1955 the

church started setting aside 50 a year for major repairs and they increased this to 90 from 1963. The actual cost proved to be ten times more. The Minister at that time did all his own decoration and repairs at the manse! The Centenary Appeal (1961) paid for redecoration of the sanctuary. Receiving some rent from letting the school obviously relieved the pressure on Deacons and congregation. From 1920 the Deacons had regularly discussed closing the Church. Each time they agreed that though the congregation was small it was healthy, the church was needed, and it would never be recovered once lost. After the 1961 redecoration they also realised the church is an architectural gem.

GH

W E E K L Y A C T I V I T I E S

Sundays		
	11-12:00	Divine Worship
	20-22:00	Contact Club

Tuesdays		
	10-11:00	Old Time Nursery
	13-14:00	Lunchtime Concert
2nd Tuesdays	19-21:00	Sacred Harp Hymn Singing

Wednesdays		
	14:30	Any Beny Russian Language Class

Thursdays		
	10:00	Rachel Ward Yoga Classes
	19:30-21:00	Heath Street Choir Rehearsals

Saturdays		
	11-13:00	Coffee Morning (check website for changes)

U P C O M I N G E V E N I N G S

F E B R U A R Y		

Tues 2nd	13:00	Lunchtime Concert: A Round of Grounds
Wed 3rd	19:00	Lucy Rose Concert
Sun 7th	11:00	Communion
Tues 9th	-	Shrove Tuesday
	13:00	Lunchtime Concert: Duo Folclore
Wed 10th	-	Ash Wednesday
Tues 16th	13:00	iyatra Quartet
Tues 23rd	13:00	Olwen Foulkes: Vivaldi

M A R C H		

Tues 1st	13:00	Lunchtime Concert: The Jacobean Strollers
Sun 6th	11:00	Communion
Sun 20th	11:00	Palm Sunday/Church covenant day
Fri 25th	11:00	Good Friday Service with Christ Church
Sun 27th	11:00	Easter Sunday
Tues 29th to Thurs 31st		Oxford and Cambridge Singing School

A P R I L		

Sun 3rd	11:00	Communion

A NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

Fundraising at Heath Street

The church is responsible for a surprising amount of money being raised for charitable causes, in three ways: direct fundraising from the Sunday congregation, our events which attract a wider group of people, and other people's events using our premises. When the latter happen we may make a charge for use of the building but we also - mainly through Ewan King - help publicise the events and Ewan welcomes audiences to the church and explains our role and mission, as he does at our own events. In a little over a year nearly 6,000 has been raised - and more besides.

In 2015 several of the Tuesday recitals were billed as raising money for particular purposes and in two cases the church offered to double whatever was raised. Thus Christian Aid received 310 for the refugee crisis from one recital and Shelter 150 from another. 2014's Waking from Sleep

raised 1,065 for Christian Aid's Syria appeal and 2015's 910 for Streetchild's work on the aftermath of Ebola. In Christian Aid Week we collected 80.

Events in the church have added to this: Clara Sanabras' concert in late 2014 raised 805 for UNHCR's Iraq Appeal; a Christmas music event for Crisis for Christmas raised 690; Anna Silvera's recent concert raised 400 for Camden's New Horizon Youth Centre; Human Cargo collected 1,676 for the Refugee Council.

On top of all this, Another Day Lost, the art installation drawing attention to the Syrian refugee crisis, which also ran at St James Piccadilly and an east London venue, raised 3,500 at these three places. Our Harvest Service kicked off a collection of food and clothes which attracted generous contributions from Heathside School parents and children and many attenders of our Old Time Nursery, some of whom took this small mountain of useful gifts to the refugee camp at Calais.

GH

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HEATH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

Church officers:

Gaynor Humphreys (Church Secretary & Treasurer)
Anni Fang (Deacon)

After the Sunday morning service:

Don't Rush Away!

Please stay and have a cup of coffee
with us in the vestibule.

For requests regarding church membership,
Baptism or opportunities for Christian ministry in
the church please contact the minister.

For questions regarding space use and room hire
please contact the minister.

Copy for the April - May newsletter
should reach Ewan King
(ewan_king@mac.com)
Not later than Wednesday 23rd March



Minister Ewan King

Heath Street Baptist Church

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