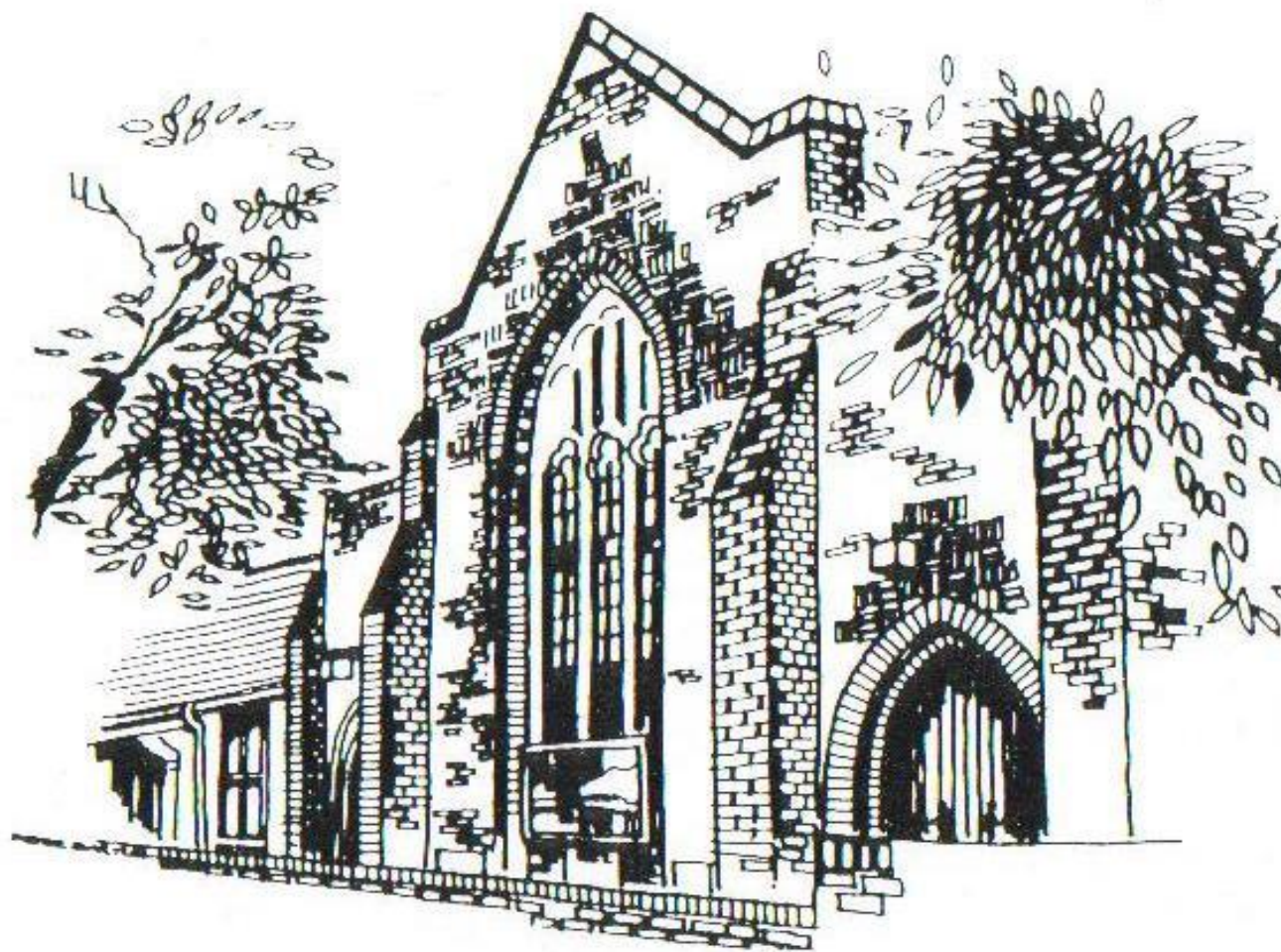




The Magazine
of
**Highams Park Baptist
Church**

Cavendish Road, E.4.



August/September 2024

CHURCH PROGRAMME

At the time of writing

Current Covid Safety Arrangements

These have been removed at this time. If you have any concerns, please contact the Duty Deacon

Details of Services are given in the Church Diary at the back of the magazine.



The Zoom Home Group has started again on most Tuesday Evenings. Please see Cherie for details and how to join.
Note – there are no meetings throughout August

There is a box just inside the main church door collecting food contributions for The Hub. If you are able, please put an extra item or two in your shopping to add to this for those who are struggling in the current financial climate.

The deadline for items for the next edition is Sunday September 22nd 2024
Editor : Dave Lyus. Email : magazine@hpbc.co.uk



Cavendish Road, London E4 9NG August / September 2024

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Dear Friends

It is a year ago since I wrote my first letter to you as your new, soon-to-arrive, minister. That year has certainly flown by, and I have thoroughly enjoyed working with and alongside you all, getting to know you better. I was really pleased with the results of the community fun day. After a very soggy morning setting up in the rain, we were blessed that it stopped in the afternoon and the sun came out! Thank you to everyone who helped in many different ways. There was an excellent turn out from church (almost everyone came) and quite a few visitors from the neighbourhood as well. I know that we were able to have some good conversations with folk on the day, and also when we knocked on the doors of the neighbouring streets, delivering the invitations. We must continue to pray and build links with our neighbours.

I am enjoying this opportunity to explore the Psalms with you on Sunday mornings over the summer, and looking at how we connect with God through them. They contain some of the most beautiful lines in the whole of the Bible: words that brings comfort; words that can inspire us; and words that draw us into a deeper life of prayer and praise. It is wonderful to know that these Psalms have been prayed and sung in community for well over 2,000 years. It has been interesting also each week to match individual psalms with different emotions and see how we can connect with God however we are feeling.

As the theologian Paula Gooder says of the Psalms, ‘they take us on a roller coaster of emotion, from joy to anguish, from praise to fury, from deep calm to utter torment.’ And so, in many ways, the Psalms are not an easy book to read. In fact, there are a few verses within them, that we might rather were not included in scripture. But they do invite us into worship that is real and honest, in a way that encourages us to pray not just on our own behalf, but also from the behalf of others in our community.

Can I encourage you over the summer to spend some time reading (or even singing?) the Psalms. Take time over each, ask God to reveal himself to you and reveal to you more about yourself. Perhaps journal or doodle the things you reflect upon. Feel free to share with me any insights you have as you do this! I pray that working through some of the Psalms will help you walk with God more closely, give you permission to be real with God, and deepen your faith in Him, day by day.

Have a wonderful summer,

Every blessing,

Cherie



Cavendish Circular



Hopefully Summer has properly arrived – but as ever it comes in stages! You can read how the Fun Day started very rainy but did get much better (the power of prayer). We thank Di for her article and Dave, Althea and Cherie for the pictures. It was a great success in no small part due to the hard work and planning and getting everything ready to show how welcoming the church is.



In the last issue we noted the sad fact that Biffo had died. A number of people from HPBC attended the funeral and the congregation at the crematorium was enhanced by a good number of Biffo's colleagues from Smithfield Meat Market. It was a good send off for a much-loved person. You can read more later.

We always ask you to remember in your thought and prayers those of our members and friends who for whatever reason are not able to attend the services at church. At this time, especially, for Cliff Tayler who has been ill for some time but as yet the reason has been undiagnosed. We also remember Rob who is still waiting positive news of an appointment for his eye operation.

We hear that Althea has just completed a photography course – it must have been serious because she uses a proper camera not just one on her phone. We look forward to more excellent pictures from her in the future.

The weekly home Zoom group has broken for August but will return in early September. New members are always welcome. Please see Cherie for details.

We wish all our readers a very good summer and, if you are off on holiday, may the weather be kind to you and have a worry free time.

Hazel's Homespun Humour

'Confidence is what we have before we fully understand the situation'

Fun Day 2024



Our Fun Day was looked forward to with much excitement and anticipation. It was planned to take place on July 6th in the afternoon.

Meetings to discuss the format and events took place and invitation cards were printed in advance. A group of us knocked on the doors of people local to the church, personally inviting them to the event and handing out the invitations. We all wanted it to be a success.

Althea and Cherie had ordered the burgers and sausages from Costco then bravely ran the gauntlet of a myriad of people queuing to get into the cash and carry the day before, then stashing them in the church fridge in readiness for the barbecue the next day.

The day arrived. The Bouncy Castle had been set up in Cowling Hall the evening before due to weather reports which predicted rain which sadly came to fruition. A group of us arrived to set up in the wind and rain. We optimistically put up awnings, bunting and balloons which blew madly while people tried to dodge the rain but we still managed to remain cheerful and hopeful. Hot drinks kept us warm. The barbecue was fired up, onions cooked and ready, signs placed giving directions and by mid-day most things were ready.



Just before 1pm we stood in a circle and prayed for a happy event and for God's blessings no matter what and by a miracle the rain ceased, the breeze died down and the sun came out!!!! We were able to put some games outside which was great to add to the inside ones and all looked good. People on the gate were ready to hand out tickets for a free burger, hot dog and a drink, then the Fun Day began!!

Luckily, we had a steady stream of people throughout the afternoon.



Dave Mayhew did a sterling job on the barbecue, with people taking orders and serving. They were well received as were the free cold drinks. Matt particularly enjoyed the hot dogs having worked hard helping in the morning and feeling very hungry by the afternoon.



The Gazebos were not really needed when the sun came out...



But we were ready if the rains came back.
But they didn't!



Peter's band set up in the church, some of them travelling some distance to get to us. They played two sessions through the afternoon with songs written and sung by Pete and the sound was amazing. We are so fortunate in that this band so willingly supports us and people came, rested and listened, enjoying the experience. One lady enjoyed it so much that she requested *Amazing Grace* and she sang out loud then people joined in.

We finished at 4pm and although there were fewer people than hoped, we all thought it had been a resounding success. Many from our church came, including people from our rental clubs. All things considered rain, Selwyn School also running an event too didn't matter and the experience definitely was fun. We were truly blessed.

Di Kendrick

The Three stages of a Bouncy Castle:



Build it



Test it



Enjoy it

Ed's note: It was very brave of Cherie to make sure that the Bouncy Castle was safe to use - she took no pleasure in doing so! - But is that not a grin on her face!

John Griffiths (Biffo)

22nd September 1947 - 22nd April 2024



In the last issue we brought you the sad news that John had died. Together with a number of people from HPBC, I was honoured to attend his funeral at The City of London Crematorium. What we were unaware of was the fact that news of his passing had reached some of his colleagues from his time as a worker at the Smithfield Meat Market and a good number of them had come to pay their respects. Cherie took the service and gave a heartfelt tribute and Peter Burke read a poem that he had written. This is Cherie's tribute: -

John Griffiths, or Biffo as he was affectionately known, was born on 22nd of September 1947 in Barts hospital to Sid and Katherine. John was the middle of three sons, Sidney was older brother and Jimmy the younger brother, and the family lived in Islington, north London. Sadly, his older brother Sidney died in his arms while they were still young teenagers, after a terrible bike accident, and this experience never left John, and he often spoke of it. John leaves behind his partner Maxine, son Danny, daughter, Lisa and grandson, Ronny.

Biffo worked at the Smithfield meat market - and that job was his life. He was well known amongst the fellow workers, and well known to be a joker. When a BBC documentary was made some years ago about Smithfield, Biff became a TV star overnight as the documentary featured rather a lot of him - in fact it was joked that it could have been called the Biffo show!

Biffo lived in Hackney when he met Maxine some 24 years ago. It was at a healing service in the spiritualist church, and they've been together ever since. Maxine has fond memories of the time when they lived together in a house in Aggiston Park, Winston Road, Hackney, where they had a lovely garden and all the park land surrounding them which was wonderful for Biffo's German shepherd dog, whose name was Spiky. He loved animals and once they moved into the flat in Helwys court, they had a cat called Bluey, and more recently a cat called Lilly.

A die-hard West Ham fan, Biffo loved football and supporting the Hammers. He was also a qualified football referee, refereeing Sunday matches and was much in demand locally for - every Sunday for years he did this.

Biffo and Maxine enjoyed many wonderful holidays together in Tunisia – nine years in a row to the same place. These were happy times.

Over the last year, Biffo had been coming faithfully to our church, Highams Park Baptist, and it was here that I got to know him. He was invited along to a service by one of the members (who was also a neighbour of his) whilst chatting at a street party and much to her surprise, he turned up and decided to give it a go. And then he kept coming back, every week because he said that he found a real peace in the church. He was always so warm and friendly towards everyone, and soon became part of the family. When he became ill, he said he could feel the love and prayers of the church.

Biffo definitely had an encounter with God in his last year, and his faith grew week by week. He often joked that his friends were surprised to hear he was going there, given his colourful past – but Biffo knew he was loved and accepted by God and by church. And we were glad to know him, and the richer for it.

One of his church friends, Peter Burke, has written a poem to express something of how we all felt, and that is a fitting way to end this tribute: -

*I didn't get to shake your hand today,
The news that came, blew our world away.*

*Some are sitting at the dock of a bay,
You just sat nicely at a Highams Park Cafe.*

*'Wotcha, Son', 'Mind how you go, Son',
You filled me with pride, confidence to go on.*

*Big Heart, Big Brother, natural East End Geezer,
Like a well-trained soldier, a Stepney Greener.*

*The scars from a fight, a weapon or two
Even growing cancer didn't scare you.*

*You made peace with yourself, your life and with God,
You put your faith in Christ, you came to the Cross.*

*I didn't get to shake your hand today,
The man in the sky had come for you,
To show you round His way.*

Pam Rhodes

I visited the Salvation Army's Regent Hall in Oxford Street on Sunday 23rd June. Pam Rhodes was the guest speaker. Pam's selection of Hymns was being played live by the Salvation Army brass band and full choir. (But not all at the same time!) Her career of 40 years has included Songs of Praise, Premier radio show host and prolific writer of Christian books.



BBC'S Songs of Praise has been on air for 63 years. Almost as long as our Church's longest serving member. Pam Rhodes has been presenting on the show for over half of that time.

I'm looking down from the balcony of this beautiful 400 seat auditorium, a minute's walk from Oxford Circus station.

Pam started with her best illustration of how important Hymns are in our Christian faith. John Wesley is described holding up a bible and quoting 'This is the word of the Lord'

then, holding up the hymn book of the day John added, 'and this is how we remember it'.

On our favourite hymns, Pam quoted 'How Great Thou Art' as TV viewers favourite hymn almost every year in the annual poll. My favourite line of this Hymn, 'When Christ shall come, with shouts of acclamation, and take me home, what joy shall full my heart'.

There was one story of a TV blooper - Songs of Praise were recording at Skegness Pam Rhodes was singing the wrong line and so BBC stopped the recording and had to start the whole service again!

Charles and John Wesley were both Anglican ministers and featured heavily in Pam Rhodes talk - Charles wrote 9000 hymns and John wrote 400 books, leaflets and various publications. They travelled together covering 250,000 miles in bringing the gospel across the country between 1730 and 1790. John used to check Charles hymns before going public with them as Charles used to make his writing very personal and John found it too emotional for congregational use. So, Pam then chose a Charles Wesley favourite, 'And Can it be'. Written in 1738. My favourite line: 'Emptied himself of all but love and bled for Adam's helpless race'. Pam made a point of us singing with gusto.

The congregation clapping when coming into the chorus, 'amazing love, how can it be' was rather rousing too. Next were memories of Songs of Praise going to villages for a series called 'Village Praise'.

The previous songs were performed brilliantly by the Regent Hall brass band. The house choir beautifully sang the next hymn with a sensitive background, 'It is well with my soul'. Written in 1873 by Horatio Spafford after losing his family on a steam ship, the Ville du Havre in the Atlantic Ocean while travelling to Britain from America. It had collided with a British iron ship and perished in 12 minutes. 226 passengers and crew drowned including the 3 children of Horatio and Anna Spafford. Horatio had originally planned to travel with the family but wasn't able to due to being ill. When Horatio hurried to join Anna in England on one of the next crossings, his ship passed the point where the Ville du Havre had sank but was filled with such peace that he began to pen the Hymn, 'It is well with my soul'. The Spaffords had 3 more children however and later moved with a few other families to Jerusalem where the first American colony was established which was known as Palestine in those days. They set up the Spafford hospital which still continues today.

On the Sunday evening following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, Songs of Praise cut their original pre-recorded service and were given the go ahead to film live in St Paul's Cathedral. The show raised prayers which was clearly moving the congregation so the BBC decided to continue filming even though they were waiting to cover the plane landing with Diana's body back to the UK from Paris.

The coverage flittered between the two but one song was incredibly moving for Pam Rhodes. An acapella version of 'Be still for the presence of the Lord' was then heard live on TV from St Paul's Cathedral, highlighting that God's Spirit was showing his Presence in the midst of the nation's grief.



'Be still for the presence of the Lord', sung by the Regent Hall Choir.

Pam went on to describe being a parent and still forgetting her children's names to this day. Pam also supports charity work that helps dementia patients. Pam tells the story of 2 patients that she was working with, falling in love. The man however asked her for advice a few hours later after not being able to recall who it was that he had fallen for!

Onward Christian soldiers, a Salvation Army classic was next. On Whit Monday (annually in May), children traditionally marched from village to village singing hymns, one of which was often 'Onward Christian Soldiers'.

Sabine Baring-Gould being the author who also managed to produce over 1200 publications of various Christian writing, living to 90 years old.

The audience was then asked who had been to the Holy Land. Pam described a visit to Jerusalem. The coach tours she was on one year which had multiple stops, viewing various key places mentioned in the Bible, had a member of the party called Phyllis. Phyllis was irritating everyone as she was holding everyone up when returning to the coach after each stop. Whilst wearing slippers, Phyllis slipped and fell in Bethlehem Square and needed some time to compose herself but this only agitated those waiting to complete the tour some more. Pam found some compassion and went over to walk her back to the coach. After finding out a little about Phyllis, her story involved a family bereavement. Her son had passed away from cancer a few months before the trip they had booked a year ago. So the Holy Land visit had meant everything to this grieving Lady.

The Hymn 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind' was next. We stood and sang again with my favourite line being 'oh still, small voice of calm' The final verse underlines Phil Slaney's message at Church recently.

Drop thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease
Take from our souls the strain and stress
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace
The beauty of thy peace

Thomas Obediah Chisholm was the Author of Pam's next favourite Hymn. Born in a log cabin and poor upbringing in 1923. Thomas became a magazine editor and later moved to work in insurance but was also a prolific hymn writer Including; 'Great is thy faithfulness'. I have many favourite lines but two to noare is Pardon for Sin and a Peace endureth', and 'Strength for Today and Bright #Hope for Tomorrow'.

Pam has presented many Christmas editions of Songs of Praise. She gave her thoughts on Christmas with a poem 'Without Love' including the lines 'if I make a tree look bright and welcoming but do so without love, I'm just a decorator'. 'If I buy the most fancy gifts at Christmas but without love, I'm just the delivery man'.

Pam described some of the other BBC presenters in her world of work. A TV show before 'Top Gear that some may remember was 'Wheels' going all the way back to presenter Chris Goffey. who she explained was way out of his depth in Japan one year somehow having to stand and sing a favourite personal song to all of Japan's most important dignitaries'

Christ alone' was the next Hymn featured. Written by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty and released in 2001.

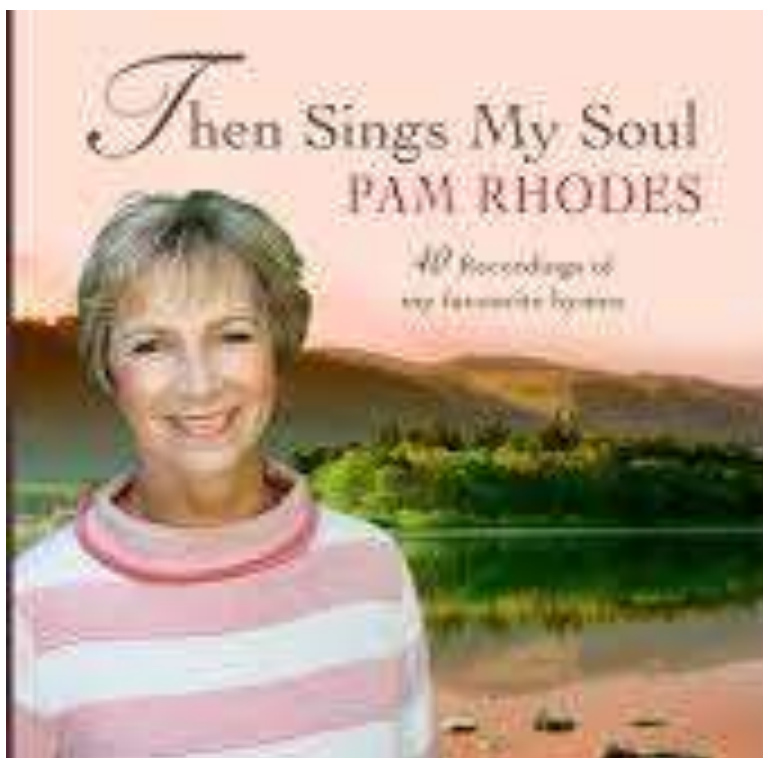
A soldier serving in Iraq and Afghanistan wrote a letter to the show and explained they were not allowed to bring a Bible with them but that he had always kept a copy of the words to a song 'In Christ Alone' with him. The words 'No power of hell, no scheme of man, could ever pluck me from his hands' had given him the confidence to serve on that war without fear.

Pam also shared the power that the hymns had on communities in history. Merthyr Tydfil had one of the UK's biggest Iron factories during the days of shipbuilding in the late 1800s. A newly established church had been inviting the workers to their services One day when the factory had to shut down early, 1500 men decided to check out the church and heard hymns for the first time. 500 men came to faith during this visit.

Then she told of Fanny Crosby, who was tragically blinded 3 days after her birth, wrote a hymn that has survived until today 'To God be the glory' and was Pam's final hymn, being played by the beautiful brass band. Crosby lived until 92, writing 8000 hymns and at her peak wrote 3 hymns in a day. After this and a closing prayer, I went out to the book table that her husband was managing. I now have a signed copy of 'Then sings my soul' which covers the background to many hymns we know.



Feel free to borrow it from the bookshelves at the back in church where I have left it.



I hope you enjoyed reading this article, I certainly enjoyed the live talk and will look to visit other events soon.

Peter Burke.

Terry Meade



Some of our older readers, especially those who have been in the Boy's Brigade may remember Terry Meade. He died recently and his family asked if they could hold a Thanksgiving Service at HPBC

There were over fifty who attended the service, Thursday 11th July at 1 pm. with tributes from the family and from Ian Berry and Chris Winward. The reading was Ecclesiastes 3:1-4, and we sung two hymns, 'Love Divine all loves excelling', and 'Will your Anchor Hold', the Boys Brigade hymn. Very rousing as a good number were old BB boys! A lovely tea in the hall thanks to the family was enjoyed. It was a real blessing to gather

and remember Terry and give thanks for his life and faith.

Terry grew up in a caring family on Ropers Avenue, in Chingford. He cherished his childhood memories with his loving parents Edith and James, his dear sisters Joyce and Sylvia and his next-door neighbour and friend Lindsay. His dad took him to Tottenham matches, his passion for the team remained intact for the rest of his life.

Terry's years in the Boys Brigade and summers on the Isle of Wight truly shaped him and brought him a fellowship he held close to his heart.

In the 1970s he left his job to experience a memorable trip through America with his friends. When he came back, his cleverness and curiosity allowed him to begin his career as a computer expert.

He loved running, because he was a very active man, but more importantly because he had the best time with his friends from the Walthamstow AC. In the 90s, he visited France with the club and met his future wife, Laurence. It did not take long for Laurence to realise she had met an incredible man and to join him in Loughton. Together they started a family and had H el ene and L ea.

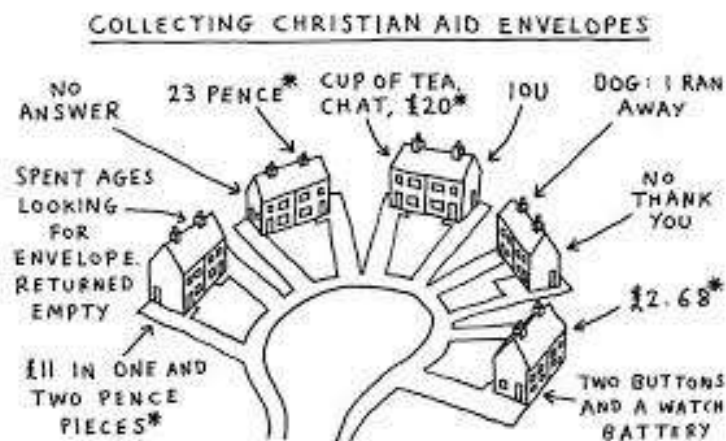
Out of love for his wife, he left London for Brittany. For 30 years, Terry was an incredibly caring husband with a great sense of humour. He was the most loving and supportive dad, always there for his daughters wherever they were and whenever they needed him. After he retired, he enjoyed playing the guitar, singing, golfing with friends, taking care of his cats and spending time with the people he loved.

Christian Aid Week - How we used to do it!

In the last issue you will have read how we had a 'café' style service as our part of Christian Aid week. This is not how it was done in years gone by...

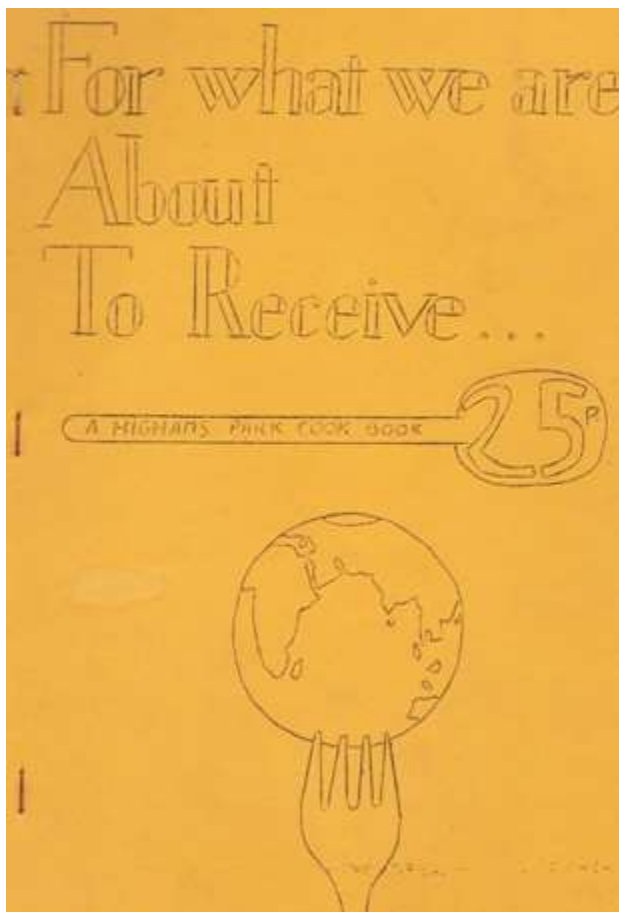
Reminders of the week to come were sent out to the churches and a representative from each church would seek for volunteers to deliver the envelopes door to door and then to collect them again later in the week. Each of the churches in Highams Park had allocated roads in which to deliver and collect. Ideally there would be enough volunteers to cover all the streets – even better if you had enough to post the envelopes through all the letter boxes and a different team to call round later. But this was in an ideal world not the real one!

Jacque was the representative for HPBC over a number of years and tried very hard to muster support often to little avail. But this was the time when there was a larger congregation and many, if not all our roads would be covered. Very often it was the more senior members who offered their services – not always practical for there was usually a large amount of walking to do and the delivery and collection HAD to be done within the week! Delivery was relatively easy – apart from Aldriche Way with too many stairs – if you could get into the blocks at all, and the sometimes odd siting of letterboxes. Then came the collecting – a less easy task! Most collectors went out in the evening when there was a better chance of finding somebody at home. But, of course, not everybody liked to answer a knock on the door late in the day. If you did get an answer you had to convince the householder that 'of course an envelope was delivered'. A spare envelope was produced - this sometimes led to fumbling in the pocket for some change – sometimes it met with a refusal (polite or otherwise). However, sometimes all was in order – the envelope was ready for collection and with a heartfelt 'Thank you' was collected and on to the next house. I found the cartoon below which vividly illustrates the task that faced collectors...



The returned envelopes were collected and together with a large number of cash bags from the bank were delivered to Jacquie. A large space was cleared and the counting began. We would open the envelopes and pour the contents onto a large sheet or similar. Then we would weed out the non-coins, then the foreign ones, the currency notes (not too many of those!) and finally arrange all that was left in piles of coins of the same value. Then these had to be made up into the correct amount for each of the cash bags and little notes written where a bag was not full. It all seemed to take an age. Once all the counting was over the paying in book was made up and off to the bank (you must remember those – or perhaps not!). We always went to Barclays Bank where there was a lady on the counter who must have been primed to be nice to our efforts to pay in and make the numbers add up. Eventually everything tallied and that was it for another year.

But this all came to an end in time – you could not get the volunteers, people were less likely to open their doors and if you had collected any money there was nowhere to pay it in. Jacquie heaved a sigh of relief that it was over but other ways of raising money had to be found...



It was the discovery of one method that prompted this article. I came across an A4 sized book of recipes collected from the members of the Highams Park Churches. It is called 'For What We Are About To Receive' and contains what are described as '87 tried and tested recipes. I have been unable to find a date on it but it was priced at 25p so must be after 1971. All the churches were represented including two that no longer exist. The Methodist Church in Handsworth Avene and the United Reform Church (ex-Congregational) in Malvern Avenue. Alas many of those from HPBC who contributed are no longer with us.

Perhaps a collector's item...

DL

Highams Park Snippets



In the last issue the ongoing saga of the redevelopment of the Regal Cinema was written about. Well, we move on and as you may already be aware the Council approved the proposed redevelopment of the Regal Cinema at the Planning Committee Meeting on Tuesday 16th July. The following appeared on the Highams Park Portal website

The developer, Mammoth Construction, have some planning conditions they have to satisfy before building works can begin. They are optimistic that the conditions can be satisfied fairly quickly and they aim to begin building work within 3 to 6 months.

The redevelopment of the Regal Cinema will include retention and restoration of street facing facades and the construction of a part 2, part 6 storey building featuring a two screen cinema ('Sui Generis' use), an ancillary café bar (Class E use) at ground floor level and 33 residential apartments (18 x 1-bedroom; 15 x 2-bedroom) on the floors above.

Perhaps more interesting is a link to a website:-

<https://highampark.london/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2.-Regal-Cinema-Historic-Building-Condition-Survey-Report-compressed.pdf>

It provides access to a report on the current condition of the building. But not only that it also includes several pictures and some detailed history of the building and its construction. There is a picture of the front of the building with a sign indicating that there is air conditioning – I am not sure of that but I do remember going to an afternoon session where the show was cancelled due to the curtains being frozen shut!



The film shown 'The Yellow Canary' was made in 1943 and tells how A woman wrongfully accused of being a Nazi sympathizer is forced to move to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada..

Who knows – this time we might actually get a cinema!



We have also mentioned in the past that there is football team in Highams Park. There is further news on the Highams Park Planning Group website - Highams Park has its very own football team called West Essex FC established in 1989. They have a thriving youth section of 24 boys and girls teams who play at Rolls Sports Ground in Highams Park. There are also have a number of adult's teams, with the Men's Senior team playing in the Essex Senior League and Cup competitions including the prestigious FA Cup. The Senior team play their matches at Match Day Centres, which is just off the Billet roundabout



Musings - *A few random thoughts about...*

Customer Service



I recently came across a article in a book about an example of customer service which now takes some believing...

Even in the 1960's some rural parts of Britain still did not have the ability to dial all telephone numbers but were instead connected by operators. The article describes how the writer lived in such a place. It tells how these operators were well versed in the happenings of their

users – an example of which was when trying to connect to a friend the caller was told that they had gone to the library and would not be back until later... The writer goes on to describe how he had some goats and one of them had fallen seriously ill. The operator was called to connect to the local vet. The vet was connected to another exchange, so the operators tied to make the connection. However, the vet was out and could not answer. The operator at the vet's exchange then found a neighbour and called to ask them if they could help. The tale goes on that this neighbour was not inclined to be helpful but the operator in her best pleading voice told that the goat would die if nothing was done. The neighbour said that this must not happen and that she would send her chauffeur to the vets to ask him to attend to the goat – (the article was originally included in a book of stories in The Times newspaper!). This was done and the goat was saved. This is only a brief outline of the happenings but does seem to show how people were very willing to provide excellent customer service. Now you would call a number only to be told (at any time of day or night) that 'we are experiencing a high volume of calls – your call is important to us, so please hold while we play some awful music'. One of my jobs many years ago whilst employed by the GPO (later British Telecom) was to answer calls from 'subscribers' to the Telex service who had a fault stopping them using their equipment. They were nearly all business customers and could not do without the service. There were about seven or eight of us answering the calls and we were told that we had to respond within three rings (actually a flashing light) and we were very competitive all trying to take a hundred or more calls a day – and there was no awful music played. This level of service is very very rare these days. We seem to be thankful if we now get what, in years gone by, would be a mediocre level of service. And what makes it even worse is that you are often asked by the company you are calling to let them know how wonderful was their service – the 'How was it for you?' questionnaire!

It is thought that the concept of customer service goes back to the Greek and Roman civilizations.

Trade was of great importance in those days as much as it is today and the merchants of long ago were well aware that providing good customer relations was a prime necessity to encourage customer loyalty.

The only way this was really likely to happen was by face-to-face interaction and a positive outcome could lead to repeat business. This pattern continued for many centuries and perhaps the next major change came about in the Industrial Revolution. At this time the output of goods from factories grew greatly and the idea of competition began to arise. If there were three or more businesses producing widgets the differentiator could be that one dealt with customers better than the others (assuming the product was of similar quality). This could mean being able to promise better delivery times, the possibility of discounts or adapting the product to better meet the customers needs. However, if there was need for complaint there was the option of writing a missive to that effect – but this was slow and it was far better if there was still the face-to-face method – perhaps to illustrate a faulty item and to seek recompense...

Customer service today relies very heavily on the ability to have a choice of the method of customer to business contact. If you have a faulty product you can return it to the place where it was purchased and rightly expect either a replacement or a refund. However, thanks to Alexander Graham Bell you can make contact by telephone or now by the internet. The service that a customer receives is now more regulated and this has increased our expectations such that we seem more willing to complain (and probably much less to praise!).

But companies have caught on to the idea that they can save money by employing fewer people on their customer service interfaces or, alternately, using cheaper labour in other parts of the world. I am sure that most of you will have at some time been connected to somebody in Asia who might have a local accent and is not used to the foibles of the English language. Hopefully they will be able to resolve the problem but it may take a bit longer and require more explanation – but, at the end of the day, you want to get the difficulty or problem resolved quickly and get on with your life. But it can be so easy – whilst typing this I remembered that I had to book a service on my boiler and it took a matter of moments via the internet and confirmation of the appointment was almost immediate. But had I decided to make a phone call to British Gas I would have taken an age to do the same thing (for some reason their voice recognition system seems unable to recognise my name which does not help!).

Strangely when I tried to find an image to illustrate customer service there were:

- a) Far less choices than usual
- b) Nearly all were for positive experiences.

Probably, after all, the best customer service there is takes place at 10.00 am on a Sunday morning...

DL

CHURCH DIARY

August

Sunday 4th	10 am	All Age Morning Service Led by Mandy Edwards
Sunday 11th	10 am	Morning Service with Communion and Sunday School Led by Bob Jenkins
Sunday 18th	10 am	Morning Service – Led by Cherie Rogers
Sunday 25th	10 am	Morning Service with Communion and Sunday School Led by Cherie Rogers

September

Sunday 1st	10am	All Age Worship .BMS Service, Led by Cherie Rogers and Phil Slaney
Sunday 8th	10 am	Morning Service with Communion and Sunday School Led by Cherie Rogers
Monday 9th	10.30 – 12	Coffee Morning in Fellowship Hall
Tuesday 10th	7.45 pm	Home Group/Bible Study on Zoom
Friday 13th	7 – 8.30pm	Youth Evening in Fellowship Hall
Sunday 15th	10 am	Morning Service Led by Cherie Rogers
Monday 16th	10.30 – 12	Coffee Morning in Fellowship Hall
Tuesday 17th	7.45 pm	Home Group/Bible Study
Sunday 22nd	10am	Morning Service Led by Cherie Rogers
Followed at	11.30am	Church Members Meeting with Bring an Share Lunch
Monday 23rd	10.30 – 12	Coffee Morning in Fellowship Hall
Tuesday 24th	7.45 pm	Home Group/Bible Study on Zoom
Sunday 29th	10am	Morning Service Led by Rev. Paul Davies
Monday 30th	10.30 – 12	Coffee Morning in Fellowship Hall

Refreshments are served in Fellowship Hall after each Sunday Service

