

Nnandi, CJ and Andy
Ujah with Rev Alan
outside Ponders End



New members at
Ordnance Rd -REJOICE!

Ponders End
Worship
Space

We give
thanks to
God



Potters Bar Town Band launch
Goffs 150 years



November 2017 – Letter to the Churches of Ordnance Road, Ponders End and Goffs Oak



Dear Brothers and Sisters
It seems I have been trying to get this letter written for a long time but sometimes the immediate demands of ministry come first. Nevertheless I am sorry not to have written to you sooner. As Paul puts it in his greeting to the Philippians: *'As God is my witness, I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.'*

The last time I wrote to you we had just experienced the Manchester bombing - if that was not terrible enough we have since experienced a combination of natural disasters through huge storms, human tragedy such as Grenfell Tower, continued terrorism, international tension around North Korea, fresh persecution and forced migration – this time in Myanmar - and in the last few weeks murderous human action in Mandalay Bay and Sutherland Springs to name but a few from a long list. Many of you will have family and friends affected by the hurricanes in the Caribbean and we hold them and all the other victims of these events in our humble prayers.

In the face of such suffering across the world we hold in tension our understanding of God as all present, all knowing and all powerful set against the clear reality of evil, revealed time-and-again in human action (or inaction such as global climate change) and suffering caused by the capricious nature of the natural world as it continues to evolve – whether that be plate tectonics and volcanoes or the microscopic scale of infectious diseases.

There are no easy answers here and many books by theologians far cleverer than us have been written about the Christian understanding of suffering. It is natural and right that when we face events like this we cling to the hope that God is in control, yet at the same time if God were to step in and stop every accident just before it happened or calm every storm even before it grew, or shut down each evil thought just as it emerged in our heads - then all of the processes of creation, our thinking and our lives would grind to a halt. There would be no suffering, but there would also be no life.

God knows all that is and will-be and yet at the same time has given freedom to us and creation. God wants us to freely choose to follow Jesus for it is our free choice that makes our love of God genuine. And so perhaps we begin to see that suffering is integral to that freedom – our freedom to love or not love and creation's creative freedom to grow and change.

Of course much of the suffering we see could be avoided or lessened if we were not so greedy or short sighted in how we build buildings or the profit driven prices we charge for vital drugs that could protect or cure millions across the world from common diseases. This is our responsibility not God's.

This may be little comfort for those of us who have lost someone **so at the heart of God's answer to suffering is of course the cross** - the place where one-God in Christ voluntarily lays down his life for the sake of the world. God knows and understands the very heart of our suffering and whilst Jesus does not take our suffering away he enables us to handle suffering *with* him.

Uniquely in Christ, hope and suffering walk hand in hand. Being a Christian is to be a co-heir with Christ, to enter into his suffering, to see and know how his heart is poured out for those in need. Being a Christian is about engaging in the suffering of the world believing and knowing that God's grace is sufficient to redeem it, to bring goodness and salvation out of the very worst of circumstances and to sustain hope when all around seems dark and lost. Karl Barth, in the face of Nazi oppression, reminds us that in the cross we may take confidence that God's grace ultimately triumphs over evil even if that is difficult to see today.

As we face a broken world and pray for those affected by so many human and natural disasters may our prayer be one of thanks that God in Christ has provided a pathway not out of but through this mess. Christ's hands flung wide, suspended by cruel nails and cradled in the loving arms of the Holy Spirit show the wisdom of God that is not our wisdom or way. God, whose response to our violence is self-sacrifice, shows us overwhelming and all-embracing love. May our response be to enter into the struggle against evil and rededicate all that we are to God – father, son and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

May God bless you and keep you. **Rev Alan Combes**

I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints in the sand....

And I said to God - I don't understand why, when I needed you the most, Did you leave me?

*And God whispered,
'My precious child,
I love you and will never leave you.
When you saw
only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you.'*

Footprints in the Sand by Mary Stevenson

1 Corinthians 1:18 *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

News from around our Churches: God has blessed us through special events recently. As a circuit we enjoyed two summer Holiday clubs at Goffs and Edmonton and a teenage Finding Faith Weekend at Ponders End. We began the year with a bang – welcoming our very own Gold Medallist and 100m World Champion – CJ Ujah - to Ponders as we reflected on 'Going for Gold for God.' We also welcomed our new superintendent – Rev Dan Haylett and his family - so please make them welcome. At Ordnance Road we celebrated 60 years of the current building and 160 years of the Eastern Enfield Methodist Society. At Ponders a couple of weeks later we installed new chairs and rejoiced in the rededication of the worship space. At Goffs Oak we launched our 150 year celebrations with a packed Brass Band concert in the village hall. Back at Ponders we celebrated 10 years of the choir and at Goffs Oak the united village Remembrance service drew over 200 people.

Last weekend I was privileged to lead a memorial service for those who passed between August 2015 and 2017. Visitors from over 25 families across the churches filled Goffs Oak to quietly reflect and remember.

Meanwhile, our Harvest services gave towards Whitechapel Mission for the Homeless and the Enfield Foodbank and we rejoice at 9 new members welcomed at Ordnance Road. We baptised Ruby at Goffs Oak and sadly lost Lynette Pasley, Stan Selby and Comfort Akimoladen.

Looking Outward at our part in God's work in the world we will soon launch of a major new circuit project led by Isata Jalloh – our circuit children's worker – called Transforming Lives For Good (TLG). This national programme brings support / mentoring to children and families who may be struggling because of things in life beyond their control. Please look out for, engage in and pray for this programme and for Isata.

Looking Forward: The circuit meeting has established a number of priorities for us moving forward, including ministry for those in the 'Third Age' to go alongside our present youth work and a request that churches take time to think and pray about their future vision. So watch this space...!!

Events for Your Diary

- **19 Nov - 4pm Circuit Confirmation at Edmonton**
 - **25 Nov - Ordnance Xmas Fete**
 - **26 Nov - 6.30pm Trinity Pre-Advent Service**
- Carol Services**
- **17 Dec - 4.30pm at Goffs**
 - **17 Dec - 6.30pm at Ponders End**
 - **24 Dec - 11am at Ordnance Road**

ADVENT Bible Study Series

From Monday Nov 27 onwards at:
Goffs Oak on Monday's at 7.30pm or
Ponders End Wednesday's at 11.15am

EN3 Churches United Carol Service

10 Dec - 4.30pm Totteridge Rd Baptist
in aid of Syrian Refugees

- **24 Dec - 11.15pm Holy Communion Ponders End**