

2 0 ~ A u g u s t ~ 0 8

Prayer for the Month.

Almighty God and Redeemer,
who called your church to bear witness
that you were in Christ, reconciling people to yourself;
help us so to proclaim the good news of your love
that all who hear it may be reconciled to you through him,
for he died for us and rose again to reign
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for all eternity.
Amen

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane. 0161 998 – 2615

Dear Friends,

The church has been in the news lately, and not always for the best reasons. Disagreements over the rightness of women as bishops were featured early in July, and I anticipate that later in July (after this is written) we shall hear more of the saga of the gay American Bishop who has decided to gatecrash the Lambeth Conference ~ and the froth and excitement of the gatecrashing will probably get more attention than the substance of the point he wishes (rightly or wrongly) to make. More on this later.

What got less attention in reports of the C/E's General Synod was the resolution which was not debated ~ about the uniqueness of Christ. Though it had a large enough number of signatures on the order paper and was high enough in the queue to be discussed it was pointedly left off the agenda. Too embarrassing? Too divisive? Not politically correct or liberal enough? One wonders. Is anyone so illiberal or reluctant to debate his sacred cows as a liberal with majority behind him?

A couple of months ago I wrote about the supposed antagonism between Science (note the capital S) and religion. In connection with that the Manchester diocesan synod was debating a resolution asking the church in general to be more robust in affirming the reality of God as Creator, and the harmony between Christian truths about God and scientific discoveries. That resolution was passed ~ the many scientists present heartily endorsed it ~ and in due course will be raised at General Synod.

I had been invited to introduce that subject, so was in the diocesan synod when the Bishop drew attention to changes in

the marriage regulations of the Church of England. For historical reasons (18th century squires were afraid that their heiress daughters would be whisked off by fortune hunters!) our rules about residence and public notice before marriage are stricter than in most other countries, but they are being relaxed in a way which recognises how families move around so much more nowadays. There was a piece about this in last month's "CruX", but more from me later in this issue.

And that Congestion Charge; we are being formally consulted about this (and the Civic Society intend to hold a special meeting to discuss it on August 12th) and Northenden definitely has an interest in this. Whatever the rights or wrongs of such a charge in general, it will have a distinct effect here because we are likely to be right on the edge of it. Read on!

Yours faithfully, Greg Forster

Northenden Methodist Church.

Palatine Road.

Minister: the Revd. David Bown,

5 Kenworthy Lane, Northenden, M 22 4 JF 0161 998 – 2158

Sunday Services.

Aug. 3 rd	11.00am	Mr. Duncan Rutter
	6.30pm	United Service @ St. Wilfrid's
10 th	11.00am	Holy Communion ~ The Rev. D. Bown.
17 th	11.00am	Joyce Burgess
24 th	11.00am	June Littlemore
31 st .	11.00am	Special Service celebrating the Golden Wedding of Mr. & Mrs Bill Joughin.
Sept. 7 th	11.00am	Morning Service
	6.30pm	United Evening Service.

**BOAT LANE
COURT**

VERY SHELTERED HOUSING

**BOAT LANE COURT,
BRETT ST., NORTHENDEN.**

RETIREMENT FLATS

ALL ENQUIRIES TO :

THE MANAGER, BOAT LANE COURT, NORTHENDEN, M 22 4 EZ

TEL. 0161 945-7064 OR 07970 676785

St. Wilfrid's Church,

Ford Lane. (Off Church Rd.)

Rector: Greg Forster (998-2615)

Organist: Arthur Mellor (928-0472)

www . stwilfridsnorthenden . org . uk

Services:



Communion on Sundays at 8.00am,
and on Thursdays at 10.00am

There is normally a "Sunday Club" for 7 – 11+ year olds meeting in the Rectory at 10.30am, for about an hour, and ...

... "Scramblers", for children from 3½ to 6+, meets in the Church Hall from 10.30 till about 11.30am., except when there is a Family Service (for parents and children together) in Church, but both of these are on holiday during August.

Aug. 3 rd	10.30am Family Communion 6.30pm United Evening Worship
10 th	10.30am Baptism and Holy Communion 6.30pm Evening Worship
17 th	10.30am Holy Communion 6.30pm Evening Worship
24 th	10.30am Holy Communion 6.30pm Evening Worship
31 st	10.30am Morning Prayer 6.30pm Holy Communion
Sept. 7 th	10.30am Family Communion 6.30pm United Evening Service @ Methodist Church

Drop in ... 2 – 5pm.

St. Wilfrid's church is open each Sunday from 2.00 – 5.00pm, for prayer, visiting and just looking round, enquiries about baptisms, weddings, ancestor hunting, ... &c.

IT'S ALL HAPPENING ... for your diaries

No bible studies will take place during August.

Coffee Morning: Sat. 30th Aug. 10.00am ...

The next women's group meeting is on September 8th. (Nothing in August). And the speaker is Charles Nevin, talking about "Idioms and Idiosyncracies" (if you want to put it that way!) In October there will be a late birthday party.

From the Registers -

Confirmed, at St. John's Brooklands on
Sunday 22nd June by the bishop of Middleton;

Sharon Harrison, Natasha Mossie Mann,
Rebecca Stapley, Charlotte Thompson.

In Memoriam

Kathleen Grubb (Brett St.) 94, Doris Nettleton (Brett St.)
Eric Barlow (Church Rd.), Geoffrey Lomax (Royle Green),
Joseph Worthington (Wilmslow), Dinah Pick (Lingard Rd.)

Wild Northenden ~ Bright and Beautiful ... G.S.F.

In March I threw out the idea of putting together a list of Northenden birds. Maurice Lees has let me see a list he has prepared. He mentions the Tawny Owl which was calling around the churchyard and further afield in the early part of the year. He also mentions seeing a Great Spotted Woodpecker, and a Nuthatch, and a selection of the thrush family: Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Redwing and Blackbird. He also recorded the Sparrowhawk. What is of interest is that he did not record Starlings in February ~ they used to be so common!

Magpie ...

... has heard that there are delays in installing seats at the new road improvements on the New Parade because the successful order has to be delivered from Spain. Surely there is a wrong sense of priorities here, in this Oh! to be so Green city of ours. Perhaps they will match the ones in Albert Square (so Magpie was told) but at what cost in oily carbon footprints treading across Europe. This is competitive tendering or something gone mad. Surely there are companies (I am sure there are: I know them) in Wythenshawe if not in Northenden proper, who could rustle up a decorative bench or two. Similarly, some excellent children's play equipment is on order for the Riverside Park ~ but how many miles is it coming? That's not

local either. Magpie does not want to be too parochial, but we do need to look at the cost of free trade.

... has also heard a rumour flying around about the Rector retiring. He decided to try to clarify this, and get an answer from the horse's mouth. When he asked the horse, it said "neigh," which didn't get him very far, so he asked the Rector instead. He said "Nay" as well, but went on to point out that the absolute retirement age for clergy is 70, and that no one else is likely to want him now.

Grouse ...

Greg Forster.

As an addition to the Wild Northenden spot, I have to report that a grouse has been found in the churchyard. It is the regular annual grouse, but it has some friends too. One of them is doggie bags. If you bag up your dog's mess, either in the churchyard or just outside it, please do not leave the bag lying there! That is even more of a mess. The mess in the first place is not nice in the churchyard, for mourners to tread in, but at least it is biodegradable and soluble; the bag is not! Please take it home, or put it in a bin.

The second grouse is about green bins. These are for green waste only, as any council operative will tell you. They are not for green waste wrapped in plastic, nor for thick turf. Please use the conventional black bins for anything in bags, wrappers, oasis, &c., and put only the rottable waste in our green bins.

And the annual statutory grouse: please do not be surprised that grass grows ~ it is, thank God, designed to! ~ and so do not complain, please, if it is long on your family grave. You are welcome to cut it yourself, but please do not use chemicals to "weed-kill" it. (Sadly it seems that chemicals have been used on some of our war graves, which is upsetting.) We aim to get round the churchyard at least once a year cutting or mowing, but in the months from April to July the grass is growing very fast, and we cannot keep on top of it; by the end of the year, weather permitting, things will be more under control.

The churchyard is managed for wildlife as well as being a graveyard

Please note, however, that we manage the churchyard as a wildlife area as well as a graveyard, and

so we do not ever aim to maintain "Wimbledon standard" lawns (though if you want that on your own graves, you are welcome to bring your own mower). Meanwhile, enjoy the waving grass-

heads, look out for the frogs or the squirrels, and if there is a special reason why you need to get to a particular grave, let me know and we will try to focus on that area next time the gardener is at work.

And while I am on the subject, perhaps I should point out that maintaining the churchyard costs money. I am reluctant to accept donations tied to the maintenance of a specific grave, since it is difficult to single out one six foot plot from among 2,500 of them, but what we do costs about £1,000 a year, which is not entirely recouped from burial fees.

Gifts to Charities and Missions last year.

At St. Wilfrid's we make a practice of giving a certain amount from the church's income to charities. I should have published a list of the ones we gave to in 2007 a lot earlier, but, at last, here it is.

Jan	St Ann's Hospice Patio Fund
Feb	Trinity Governors
Mar	Bible Society
Apr	Church Mission Society
May	RNLI
June	Book Aid International
July	Church Housing Trust
Aug	Garden Charity
Sep	Church Housing Trust
Oct	Send a Cow
Nov	Shelter
Dec.	Children's Society

"Northenden Speaks".

Last month I mentioned the consultation in the village in June. The results were studied during late June, and a summary was published at the Civic Society meeting on 8th July. Copies of that are available from me if you would like to see it, and I am putting a copy in the library on Church Rd. GSF

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) South Manchester Meeting

There is a meeting for worship

at the Friends' Meeting House, Wythenshawe Rd.,
at 10.30am every Sunday.

Children welcome. * Details from Lesley Thomson (491-1323)

The main hall and smaller rooms are available for hire;

~ contact Peter Todhunter (Meeting House Warden) 834-5797,

Getting Married after October ...

Who can get married in Church? As the law stands now, for a C/E wedding, one (or both) of you must either live within the parish, or be on its electoral roll (i.e the church membership list, not the civil voting register), or in certain circumstances get an archbishop's licence. For the second and third of these possibilities you will have to have been baptised.

There is no change in those options, but from Oct. 1st further possibilities are available. They allow for those circumstances where a family has moved away, but they still feel the emotional ties with the church. You still cannot just pick the prettiest, and go for that; and I can see some emotional links which do not seem to be allowed for in the new set up, but it

does go some way to meeting people's hopes and dreams. It does also regularise the situation where a parent's address is given for marriage purposes, when the

The new rules go some way to meeting people's hopes and dreams.

son or daughter no longer truly resides there. (You should see the legal contortions in the way "residence" is defined for the different possibilities currently on offer!).

The new list of valid links with a church was printed in July's Crux, and I will not repeat them here, but if anyone is thinking of getting married and wants to talk about whether it is now easier for them to go to the church of their choice, get in touch and we can talk about it. (Incidentally, that list was not quite correct: it is sufficient that a parent or grandparent got married in the church in question, not just the actual two parents of the person concerned.)

And while I'm talking about weddings, let me put in a word for marriage itself ~ the lifelong relationship. You can take that at two levels. One is practical and legal; despite some changes in the law recently, there are legal advantages in being married, rather than simply partners. They come to the fore most clearly if something goes wrong, and inheritance taxes have to be found, or next of kin consulted, but they are important at such a time as that, and love involves thinking about the worse as well as the better. I heard only the other day (not for the first time) of someone who lost his home when his partner, nominally the sole tenant of a council house, died.

And there is a moral and spiritual side to marriage too. Marriage recognises that human love and family is not just a private arrangement or even a kind of commercial contract. It is loving your partner enough to make a public commitment of that love; it is tuning in to something which is bigger than the both of you, and drawing strength and inspiration from the best of that ... It is loving your partner enough to make a public pledge of that love. something; it is recognising that we need the support of God's love for when human love grows strained or frazzled; it is praying for his strength for the two of you not just on a glamorous and spectacular day, but for the years that follow it. It should not be dismissed as outdated, or oppressive ~ in fact, I reckon that the lack of it can make for more exploitation.

• • • *n* • • • *H* • • • ~ • • • *n Oro* • • . Andrew Leach.

I took a flight the other week with a friend of mine to Thessaloniki, where we were met at the airport by his uncle George. We drove for two hours to the port of Ouranopoli, which lies to the north-west of the eastern finger of Chalkidiki. From there it was a short ferry trip to one of the most unique places on earth. The region is known as Mount Athos, or "Agion Oros" ~ the holy mountain.

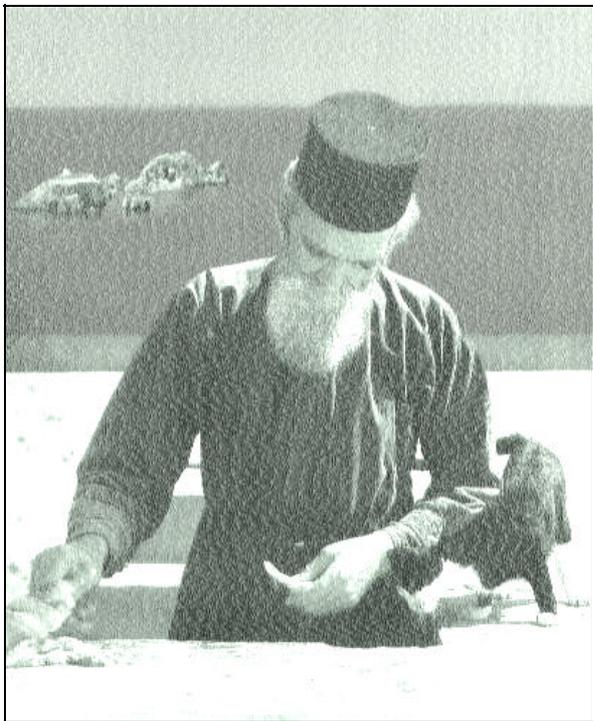
It is said that when the Apostles resolved to draw lots for the areas where they would preach the virgin Mary expressed a desire to be included. She was given Asia Minor, but the angel Gabriel appeared to her and pointed her in the direction of the peninsula of Macedonia known as Athos. She was told in a vision that this was to be her garden-estate and paradise, a haven where people who need refuge will be saved. From that time on monastic life grew in this land, the garden of the virgin Mary. Since the monastic life began it was decreed that no women would be allowed to set foot on "the virgin's garden", and apart from the many cats there are no female animals!

We arrived at the port of Dafni, and were transferred to the monastery where George had booked our stay. All the roads are no more than dirt tracks, and two hours by mini-bus was quite scary. We arrived, Two hours on dirt tracks in a mini-bus was quite scary!

and were welcomed with a Greek coffee an ouzo, a glass of water and the offer of what we know as Turkish delight. We were shown to our dormitory, which was shared with eight other men.

It was soon time for prayers, which went on for two hours ~ lots of chanting, and much kissing of icons. We were shown the bones and skulls of dead saints. I refused to kiss them, (unlike all the orthodox, who seemed to spend the whole time kissing icons, jewellery, ... you name it! I think the services were a little lost on me ~ it was all Greek, after all ~ but I just used the time for my own prayers and meditation.

After vespers it was dinner. The dining rooms are directly opposite the church doors, and we were welcomed into a magnificent hall with beautiful paintings and frescos all around the walls and ceilings, depicting biblical scenes. Dinner was laid out on the tables in front of us ~ a vegetarian dish, with salad,



bread, wine, water and a piece of fruit. During dinner there was hardly any noise ~ only the sound of a monk reading from the Scriptures to keep your mind on God. After dinner we were back to church for another half hour of prayers.

After this was over, we went for a little walk; there was a place outside the monastery grounds to telephone and sit and talk with other guests and take in some breathtaking views across the bay. It soon goes

Not actually Athos, but not far off! dark. They have a different clock (and calendar) from us, so when it is dusk it is midnight, and as there is very little electricity and you are relying on one oil lamp per dormitory you end up going to bed early ... which was just as well, since we were back for prayers at 5am. By the second day I was not sure what time it was. I hadn't a watch and with the two hour time difference from the UK, and now on Mt. Athos I was just going by the sun.

We were back in church for prayers at 5.00am

But this did have the effect of slowing you down in many ways. You begin to appreciate the silence and the rhythm of the monastic day, the quiet dinner, time to think and reflect on the peace and stillness of the peninsula. We stayed for three days, and visited three different monasteries; all slightly different, but all hugely rewarding and of course, ... no charge; not even a donation. It is written into their constitution to provide a haven for pilgrims.

It was soon time to leave, and as we took our last look at a land that hasn't changed much in hundreds of years we soon faced up to the reality of the busy seaside resort of Ouranopoli. All of a sudden we were faced with a cacophony of noise from a busy small town; honking cars; motor bikes; people taking a day trip on a pleasure boat; men and women sunbathing on the beach, and busy shops and restaurants everywhere. We went for a quick swim and lunch, and relished the pleasure of wearing shorts for the first time in three days (long trousers, and no open toed shoes were the order of the day on Mt. Athos) but couldn't help but think that the Western way of life is out of kilter compared to what we had experienced during our stay on Mt. Athos.

They say that Prince Charles goes to Mt. Athos every year for a week, to paint and meditate. I can see why. What a place to really get away from normal life for a few days!

SYNOD, WOMEN AND BISHOPS, ~ ROMANS 14.

I promised some thoughts on the Lambeth Conference in last month's issue, but I now realise that it will scarcely have started by the time this issue has to go to press. What I write now about the Church of England's general synod may be relevant, however. That meeting was, as I said above, overshadowed by the controversy about women as bishops.

It is clearly a business where people with their different views and understandings nevertheless feel that their identity as Christians and as people is deeply affected. As a result whatever decision had been reached, there would have been people who felt not just aggrieved at the decision but hurt as people.

People felt their personal identity was at stake.

Both sides of the dispute look to the roots of our faith as the arbiter of the matter, whether it is found in the bible or in early and subsequent tradition. Both sides can find evidence to

support them. Jesus chose no women within the 12 apostles ~ but quite counter to the culture of the time women were in the group which followed him closely, and at his resurrection it was women who were the first witnesses; St. Paul tells Timothy that women are not to “hold authority” in the church ~ but when you look at the meaning of the word (and its secular connotations) you find he is talking about domination, not leadership ~ but why single out women?

Women, he tells the Corinthians, should not speak in church ~ but in the same letter gives instructions that when they speak they should do so wearing a modest headscarf. Perhaps he is discouraging whispered questions in the back row by people who had been disadvantaged in education, and so needed to ask their husbands at home later what the preacher had been on about! The same Paul asserts that in Christ there is no “Greek” or “Foreigner”, no “Male” or “Female”. ... But nevertheless a tradition of (official at least) male leadership grew up. So where do we go from here?

Perhaps we should look at the hurt, not the principle, and at what makes the church, rather than what the church has made. Let me explain. There is a section of Paul’s letter to the Romans where he is dealing with an issue which was very much tied up with people’s identities as Christians and as themselves. In Ch. 14 he talks about what people may eat, which seems rather trivial to an outside observer, but remember that half of those he was writing to were Jews, while the other half had learned that God accepted them through Christ in spite of the fact that they were not Jews.

So did it matter for their new identity if they did not adopt kosher cooking? Did it matter if the meat had come from a sacrifice to Zeus or some other pagan god? And did it matter for the Jews if they ate with a non-Jew and the meal was not kosher? Paul was confident that he could eat

St. Paul knew the hurt felt on both sides of the case.

anything, Jew though he was, but he also knew how upset (deep down) people could get about this. It wasn’t (you might say) just a matter of personal taste: it touched on people’s identity and the nature of what God had done for them in bringing them into the church. So how did he deal with this dilemma?

He is clear about what he believed, but then goes on to say that people who are confident should make concessions for

those who were less so. Do not for the sake of food undermine someone for whom Christ died! He also talks about people on both sides of that divide having their "faith". He is using the word in an unusual way, and when he has a similar discussion elsewhere he uses the word "conscience". People, he teaches,

God's kingdom is not about food rules, but love and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.

should come to their own conscientious decision about this issue, and others (either way) should respect that conscientious choice. The kingdom of God is

love and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit, not regulations and rituals about food or drink or whatever ~ but for those who were bothered about these things, accommodation should be made.

Applying this concern over hurt caused to matters in connection with the synod vote, it is perhaps a moot point whether in their vote for women as bishops the "liberal" members of synod were liberal enough towards those whose identity and whose understanding of the church did not include women bishops. They should have been. It remains to be seen how the informal guidelines are drawn up for an episcopate which includes women, and then how they are put into practice.

And as for the other business, which will no doubt hit the headlines at Lambeth ... ? Is this a matter of conscience and identity, or of moral laws alone? Can both sides see the hurt involved, and not just parade their own? Is this a valid parallel?

Greg Forster.

And Coming next Month ...

The Unique Christ – common ground, but a unique saviour.

... thoughts on the Anglican church, after Lambeth...
... that Congestion Charge, after the NCS discussion... etc.