

. D E C E M B E R 2 0 0 6 .

**Cover Picture;** An angel for Christmas – and a reminder of all the musical activities in church over the Christmas season, organised by schools or church. Photo by John Hill-Wilson of one of the angelic choir musicians in St.Wilfrid’s Church.



**Prayer for the Month,**

O God our Father, in this Christmas season you again make known to us the coming of your Son, the holy Child of Bethlehem, our Lord Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh;  
Confirm our faith and fix our eyes on him, that he may illumine our hearts and shine in our words and actions;  
May the day dawn and Christ the morning star rise in our hearts as we give him glory both now and ever.

Through him, our Lord and our redeemer; Amen.  
Amen.

**Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane,  
0161 998 – 2615**

Dear Friends,

Where do the years go? Last New Year does not seem so long ago! Christmas has, whether we like it or not, come round again, and though the beginning of December is a bit early to be reading it, happy Christmas to you all.

Later in this edition Sue has made some pointed comments about Christmas shopping, for which I am glad, because it spares me the job of saying the same things. Celebration is good, and presents are good, but it can get out of hand.

Perhaps the speed with which years go round is an indication of the age of the observer. With age comes nostalgia, but I am not sure that I can be all that nostalgic about Christmas. If only I could talk about carol singing in the snow, but all I can remember is an attempt at “carol” singing one *Easter* when we were in Bolton. Not many folk reacted: you don’t expect people to be singing hymns in the streets on a Good Friday evening, do you? But it did snow! Another wry memory is of Christmas carol singing around Northenden, unable to cater for requests because we were bound by what came next on the tape recorder we used as musical backing. Ah! the wonders of modern technology! Yes, those were the days. Nostalgia didn’t used to be like that.

Seriously, as a writer I should like to be able to say something new about Christmas. What new angle can I bring to the old story? But really, it is the novelty of the old story which is its power.

*God is found in human form, much to nature’s wonder, and the world, renewed, reborn, owns in Christ its ruler.* There is a personal Power who is at the root of all the universe, and who has created this world within it. In other words, despite the myths of secularism, there is a God. So much we can agree with many people and many religions across the world ~ though I would stress the personal character of God. He is not just “the Force” ~

an “It”, even with a capital letter, but is someone we can relate to, and someone who wants to relate to us as his creation.

Where Christian belief is distinctive is in holding that this Creator-God came to share in the life of his creation uniquely and personally in Jesus. *God was found in human form, ....* In fact, the Latin of the carol from which that is translated is more definite: “God is made human.” That may seem an impossibility, and the carol expresses this; “Nature looks on in wonder and admiration.” Why should God want to get his hands, as it were, dirty? Does he need to, to understand us? And is it possible?

Certainly God can understand human life more fully than we can as an objective observer, but understanding is not simply external analysis. God knows what it feels like to be misunderstood and mistreated as a human being; he also knows our joys and warmth, through Jesus’ experience. More than that; he shows us in person what he is like, and as a good leader has been there with us in the sort of things he expects us to do. He does not try, you might say in W. S. Gilbert’s words, “to lead his regiment from behind!” And ultimately, since Christ’s death on the cross is the act which breaks the power of sin in our lives, his genuine human existence is an inescapable part of the package. All that is a rather elaborate way of explaining and describing the very simple and beautiful fact “*Christ is born of Mary, ~ virgin mother, holy child.*” And it is a cause for rejoicing too.

But is it possible? For the ancient world the question was “How can a *holy* God get involved in the unholy and sinful physical world?” The Christian answer was that what God touches is made holy, and he came to deal with sin. The modern “scientific” world asks more technical questions. How can Christ be fully human without a human father? My answer is both fully complete, and I suppose unsatisfactory for someone who wants the detailed data. It is God who invented genetics, and all else scientific. I trust him to be able to use it in a way which is honest and appropriate to this situation. But in the end life is more than analysis. We have to move beyond the science to the wonder; “*Come with gladness, come with joy, ... gladly let us praise him.*”

But Christmas is more than just the joy of a baby’s birth. It is incomplete without the rest of his story. Again, to quote that carol, it is about a renewed Earth recognising Jesus as its ruler.

“The world has been renewed by Christ who reigns over it.” So Christmas is about the reshaping of the world, so that Christ’s values rule in people’s hearts and thinking, and spill out into the communities that we live in, and into wider society.

Maybe the language of kingship trips too easily off our tongues as Christians, especially at Christmas ~ *glory to the new-born king*. ~ though it is part of the original picture. Jesus is “Son of David” born in royal David’s city, and so he inherited the royal expectations of the ancient Jews. But he preferred to use less power-centred ways of talking about his work. “My kingdom is not of this world,” he said to the Roman governor, but it is not just a matter of pie in the sky, even royal pie; his rule in our lives shapes the way we treat the world around us now. (now see p12!)

*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.

3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 11.00am Mr. David Hillary  
6.30pm United Service: The Rev. David Bown  
10<sup>th</sup> 11.00am Holy Communion. The Rev. David Bown  
17<sup>th</sup> 11.00am Mr. Tony Fawthrop

**24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve.**  
11.00am **Carol Service** Mrs. Irene Cooper  
**5.00pm Circuit Communion Service**  
**@ St. Andrew’s Church.**

**25<sup>th</sup> – CHRISTMAS DAY**

**10.30am The Rev. David Bown.**

31<sup>st</sup> 11.00am The Rev. David Sanders

**COMMUNITY LUNCH ... ~ CHRISTMAS DINNER**

on **Wed. 13<sup>th</sup>**, 12.30 pm  
at the “Eatery”. Victoria Rd.

**Fun Bingo: Sat. 16<sup>th</sup> Dec., 2.00 – 4.00pm. ~ *Christmas Party***

**MRS. HELGA BUCKEL**

We were saddened by the death of our friend Helga Buckel on October 29<sup>th</sup>.

She joined us about five years ago, and since then became very much part of our church family. She shared with us in worship and our social occasions and we came to appreciate her many gifts. Helga played a very big part in the setting up of our Community Lunches project, where her culinary skills were very much in evidence.

We send our condolences to all her relatives, friends and neighbours (not forgetting her two cats!) who, like us, will be missing her. We will remember her.

**The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)  
Wythenshawe Meeting**

**There is a meeting for worship**

**at the Friends' Meeting House, Wythenshawe Rd.,**

**At 10.30am every Sunday.**

Children welcome. Details from Enid Pinch (445 – 6778)

**The main hall and smaller rooms are available for hire;**

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

**Magpie ...**

... is contemplating the concept of negative theft. In the course of work at St. Wilfrid's church to install the toilet work was done on the porch roof, with scaffolding in place for about a week. On the Monday morning the Rector came round to open up, and from his perch on the beech tree Magpie saw him find first a ladder lying on the ground, and then two piles of lead flashing. You could almost see his heart sag. The contractors arrived. "Is this your ladder?" he asked. "No." "Have they ripped out the lead?" he asked when they had climbed up to carry on with the work. "No, that's the stuff we took out on Friday, and stacked up here." So; no damage done, the labour of bringing down half a hundredweight of lead bypassed, and net profit, one ladder.

... and talking about the work on the church porch, there is a neat symmetry about it. Thirty or so years ago a memorial door was installed at the outside of the porch. The contractor who made it was James Fitzgerald. As a doorway that porch is now being well and truly blocked by the toilet cubicle, but the door itself remains, and the person who closed it for the last time before the cubicle framework was put in place was none other than James Fitzgerald, now working on this project with his son Maurice who runs the firm.

... and for the record, the people who were commemorated by that door were Charles and Sarah Royle, Frances Burns, Annie Torkington, Margaret Connell, Rhoda Herbert, Ethel Millward and Alice Brundrett. The rector was able to discuss the plans with the Royle family recently when Kath Vernon, another of the family, died. The memorial plate has been rescued, and will be reinstated somewhere once the work is finished.

The Church of England has recently engaged in a goalpost moving exercise. From time immemorial (1153) churchwardens did not cease to be churchwardens until their successor had been sworn in (or they had died or the bishop had given them specific permission to stand down.) Last year it all changed, and unless wardens had been positively sworn in by the end of July, their tenure lapsed. Unfortunately Manchester Diocese also changed the goalposts, by altering the dates of the swearing in service, which left our wardens out on a limb (or wherever you end up when the goalposts aren't there). But, praise be, the bureaucratic equilibrium of the Church has been restored, and all is now well with the world: prompted by the good offices of the Venerable the Archdeacon of Manchester an election was held on Sun. 12<sup>th</sup> Nov., and Peter Hoyland and Sandy Latham were duly elected (for the second time) as Wardens for 2006 – 07. What a relief! Magpie can at last sleep easy in his nest, knowing that the church will not disintegrate at least until the next election.

What do you think of the traffic lights on the Palatine Rd./ Church Rd. corner. "Not a lot," you may reply. They are a good idea, which has not been implemented well in practice. i.) Many pedestrians use their common sense and do not wait for any green men to tell them when to move (they only flash if you have pressed the nearest button). They cross when the road is clear

and the vehicle light is red. And ii.) many motorists do not seem to use any common sense. Having crossed the first light they find that the system turns red against them. They see the brown pedestrian crossing markings and a red light in front of them, and freeze, even if there is no pedestrian in sight. This blocks the traffic coming out from the side on a green light; result, gridlock!

The trouble with cat-flaps is that not only your own animals use them. Most enterprising neighbourhood tom-cats have a good idea of where the cat flaps are and what's on the menu. The Rector's cat-door has a different class of interloper. He (?she – its rather difficult to tell) is brown and spiky and has been known to sit *in* the cats' dinner plate until he has emptied it. If you interrupt him, he rolls up in a ball, or bustles off at high speed. Yes, you've guessed, a hedgehog (or should it be a *house-hog*?)

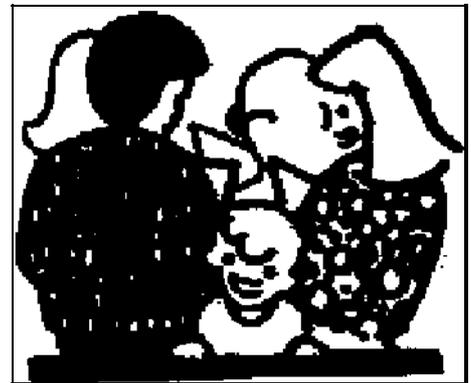
## St. Wilfrid's Church,

*Ford Lane. (Off Church Rd.)*

**Rector: Greg Forster (998-2615)**

**Organist: Arthur Mellor (928-0472)**

**[www . stwilfridsnorthenden . org . uk](http://www.stwilfridsnorthenden.org.uk)**



## Services:

On Sundays at 8.00am, and on Thursdays at 10.00am there is a Communion service (using the old Prayer Book).

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

**A Sunday School**, 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.

- |                      |               |   |
|----------------------|---------------|---|
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec. | 10.30am       | Family Communion & Parade. Toy Service* |
|                      | 6.30pm        | United Service at Methodist Church.     |
| 10 <sup>th</sup>     | 10.30am       | Holy Communion                          |
|                      | <b>5.30pm</b> | Evening Worship                         |
| 17 <sup>th</sup>     | 10.30am       | Holy Communion                          |
|                      | <b>3.00pm</b> | <b>Christmas Carol Service.</b>         |

24<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Holy Communion  
11.30pm Christmas "Midnight" Communion

Mon. 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day.  
8.00am Holy Communion (1662)  
10.30am Family Communion.

31<sup>st</sup>. 10.30am Holy Communion  
5.30pm Evening Prayer.

6<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2007 10.30am Family Communion (Epiphany)  
5.30pm United Evening Worship.

**Please note that the times of the evening services at St. Wilfrid's have been changed as an experiment from 6.30 to 5.30pm during December and January. Will this fit more conveniently into people's timetables, so that you can come more easily? Please let us know (by coming or saying!)**

***Please note too that the church is open each Sunday afternoon from 1.45 – dusk (except Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>), for prayer, visiting, enquiries, &c.***

"It's all happening ..." ~ For your Diaries

**Christmas Fair ... Sat. 2<sup>nd</sup> December.**

A warm welcome is extended to everyone, to attend our annual Christmas Fair, to be held in the Church Hall on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec., from 12.30 to 3.00pm. Stalls and side-shows, and most of all, mince pies! ~ the light refreshments are free, and so is

Mon. 4<sup>th</sup> Dec. Women's Group. 7.00pm (see box.)

Wed. 6<sup>th</sup> Bible Study, Rectory, 8.00pm (St. Luke)

Thu. 7<sup>th</sup> Carols & Folk Music Concert, 7.30pm (see panel)

Thu. 14<sup>th</sup> 9.15am-ish; School Christmas Worship in Church  
Carol Service: Sun. 17<sup>th</sup> @ 3pm.

There are a number of events, for St. Wilfrid's and for Northenden Community Primary Schools, in St. Wilfrid's Church over the two weeks 6<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Women's Group ~ January '07 meeting **Mon. 8<sup>th</sup>** (to be confirmed)

## THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING ... 1/3/07

Put a note in your diaries for Thurs. 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007. We shall be hosting a concert at 7.30pm by a group of Russian singers who call themselves Lyra, and who are all graduates of music academies in St. Petersburg. More details to follow.

### WOMEN'S GROUP ...

... Christmas party, on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> Dec., at the earlier than usual time of 7.00pm in the Rectory. Bring the proverbial food for half a person if you can, but if you can't, just bring yourself and enjoy the food and the company and the festivity, whether you have come before or whether this would be your first time to come. Lifts can be arranged, so contact Sue on 998-2615.

### Sue writes ...

Christmas has come around again! To all those I might not see (or might forget to say it!), a happy and peaceful Christmas. To those who might be alone at Christmas, don't be! There is room around our table and, to me, Christmas is a time for sharing and welcoming others, as Joseph and Mary were taken in at Bethlehem and given shelter and hospitality, however meagre.

I admit that Christmas has mixed emotions for me; nostalgia for the magic of childhood, for when my parents used to arrive gift laden on Christmas Eve, and of sadness because Christmas *has* lost some of its magic through over-commercialisation and the ever earlier arrival of festive goods in our shops. We are exhorted to eat, drink and be merry, but over-indulging and overspending are not the key to happiness – often the very opposite.

I find myself now shopping and thinking “we don't *need* this. We'll never possibly eat it all.” ... and then feeling I might be being mean by not having what everyone else is enjoying. But surely the enjoyment is in sharing and giving, time and laughter as much as anything, enjoying the change of routine and forgetting the pressure of jobs and general day-to-day busy-ness, and remembering that the reason for it all is not to increase the dividends to supermarket shareholders, but to rejoice in what we

have and what God has given us as unworthy and often undeserving children.

We shall be collecting goods for the Wood Street Mission, Manchester's own charity for the needy, and for the drop-in centres. Packet soups, tins or boxes of biscuits, warm clothes, children's toys and games (new or in good condition) are all welcome.

Thank you, and God bless your Christmas and New Year.  
**Sue Forster**

From the Registers ...

In Memoriam ...

Nancy Cooper (ex Patterdale Rd.) 91, Irene Pickard,  
Elizabeth Roscoe (82), William Hothersall,  
Daniel Crawford (18)

Baptised on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November

Thomas James Bettridge, Calum Anthony Buckley.

It was a nice touch that this baptism was conducted by Tom's grandfather, Graham Bettridge, recently retired as incumbent of Kirkby Lonsdale.

**Toilets update ~ church and hall:** *Greg Forster*

In the hall the work on the toilets is completed. As I write we are waiting for a delivery of some very special glass which the City Council building inspectorate insist on, so that the fire doors are fire proof ~ as if anyone will hang around for half an hour to prove it in a burning building when there is a spanking new fire exit for them to use! There is also a delay because the City Council disablement officers insist on a platform lift which is a foot wider than the industry standard, and so needs a special order.

Within the church work continues apace. I was joking with the contractors the other day that it is already the warmest place in the church, with three inches of insulation (actually for sound as much as temperature) built into the cubicle walls. On cold days perhaps there will be a queue. We are not sure whether there ought to be a ceremonial opening, and if so who

should do it. By the time you read this it may even already have happened. I am writing on 20<sup>th</sup> Nov., and the contractors are seriously talking about being out by “next week”.

As part of the job we have tried to open up the old drainage system from the church downspouts. It is proving quite a saga, and we have found one feature ~ a brick junction between three pipes, possibly Georgian ~ which is unlike anything that the Council Buildings’ Inspector has seen before. More on this later, perhaps.

### St. Wilfrid’s School. New Entrance. *Greg Forster*

Work began early in November on a new entrance lobby and library room at the school. On paper it should take about 8 weeks. (On the ground, in the mud, who knows?)

In the process the facilities for teachers will be improved, so that they have not only a “staff room” but also a “preparation room” where they can work without interruption on lessons, marking, &c. The administrative office will be moved, so that there is more space and it also gives greater control over who is coming in to the building. And some years ago the computer corner in the old library began growing, so that it has now taken over the whole of the old library space. We are now creating a new library so that this important part of learning is not squeezed out.

Incidentally, did I publish the fact, last term, that we had had a very good “SIAS” inspection? That is the check up on the specifically Church features of the school that is done in parallel with the more general “Ofsted” inspection. (It stands for Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools ~ I think that if you know all the initials you must be half way to a “very good” report for a start!)

## Carols & Folk for Christmas

Kieron Hartley & Friends

Thursday 7th Dec. 7.30pm  
Adm. £3, Proceeds to the Booth Centre,  
**Supporting Manchester's Homeless**

**Churchyard ~ a note.      Greg Forster**

As noted elsewhere in Concord, we have been digging trenches for the new drains through the churchyard. As one might expect in the course of such excavation, in ground that has been used for burial for at least a thousand years, some bones and bone-fragments have been uncovered.

Since they are actually above the old drainpipe which was laid in about 1875 it is clear that we are not disturbing primary burials, but moving again what was disrupted back then. I have been doing the trenching within this old area of the churchyard myself, knowing that such discoveries were possible, and I have handled them with all due respect.

One or two people have mentioned these discoveries to me and asked about them, though we have tried not to make a great "thing" about it. This note is simply to reassure you that once the work is complete we will re-inter what has been found as near as possible to the original location.

**NEW DAWN COUNSELLING.**

Free, professional counselling  
at the New Dawn Community Centre,  
Button Lane, Northen Moor. Tel. 0161 – 962-8100.

*Counselling in a Christian context.*

The service is free, though donations towards the costs are welcome.

**Christ the King?**

In my letter on page 3 I suggested that the kingship of Jesus consists, among other things, in the way in which we let his rule shape the way we live *now*. What might that mean? What attitudes need to be changed in our hearts as well as in our government? A glance at the Beatitudes ~ what God counts

blessed ~ may help. Look at the beginning of Matthew's gospel, chapter 5 in the bible. That is a different kind of kingship.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Our age, and Jesus's before it, sees wealth as a must-have item. More important in God's reckoning is to know our spiritual poverty and hunger, and to turn to him to put it right.

*Blessed are those who grieve, for they it is who will be comforted.* Sorrow can be numbing, and it is all too easy to try through prescriptions or other quick fixes to avoid it. Being sad about the state of the world, or our own situation, is not easy, but neither is it wrong. As we turn tears into prayers, God will give his reassurance. God is closer to the sad than to the jolly.

*... Blessed are those show mercy. They shall receive it.* At the heart of Christ's message is forgiveness ~ giving it as much as getting it. Our driving force should not be self-assertion, or putting in a claim if we are injured, but understanding compassion