

2 0 ~ D e c e m b e r ~ 0 9

Prayer for the Month.

Lord Jesus, your light shines in the world; help us to live by it and reflect it.

You came to your own and your own did not recognise you; help us to welcome you into our thinking and our living.

You became flesh, sharing our human nature to the full; help us to see your glory, grace and truth and so to worship and trust you.

You make God known to us in human terms; help us to respond to that vision of true glory.

Amen.

Based on John's Gospel, ch. 1.

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane,
Manchester, M 22 4 NQ
0161 – 998-2615

gsf @ stwilfridsnorthenden . org . uk

Dear Friends,

Firstly, of course, Happy Christmas! In that vein, can I get in a mention for the St.Wilfrid's Women's Group Christmas Do here, in a place that I hope you will be reading as soon as you get Concord. Because of Sue's current family commitments we have had to bring it forward a week to 30th Nov. And if you get this too late to make it, sorry again. Remember, please bring food for half a person if you are coming!

So, happy Christmas! A time when there are all sorts of expectations and activities, but at the heart of it all is the fact that it is Christ's-mas, a celebration of Jesus and his coming. In all the other razzmatazz, or stress, let us not forget that.

Yours faithfully,

Greg Forster

e-Concord e-lectronically ?

It occurred to me during the postal disputes at the end of October that some of you who take Concord by post (and even some who do not) might like to receive the magazine electronically. If you want a copy emailed, let me know (the e-mail address is near the top of page 1.) If you want to look up St.Wilfrid's website you should find the magazine there soon after

the beginning of the month. In both cases some of the adverts and the pictures might be missing.

Northenden Farmers' Markets ~ December...

There are two markets in December ~ the usual first Saturday one on the 5th, and a special Christmas edition on 19th. Meat, cheese, fish, vegetables, pies, sweets, coffee and cake ... roll up! Food that is good for you and good for the village.

There is no market in January, but there is one on February 6th 2010 as usual, 10am to 4pm.

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,

As usual, there will be a short carol service at South Manchester Quaker Meeting House (at the corner of Sale Rd. and Wythenshawe Rd.) on Christmas Day at 10.30am. All welcome.

CHAPTERS @ *St. Wilfrid's Hall*

On Saturdays from 10am till noon we are selling second hand books in the Church Hall for St. Wilfrid's church. (Not 26th!) so please tell your friends (Psst! ~ there's tea cakes too!)

AND CARDS TOO

On Sat. 5th there will also be a sale of individually hand crafted Christmas and Greetings Cards, by Roni Armstrong.
See you at CHAPTERS !

N orthenden **M**ethodist Church.

Palatine Road.

Minister: the Revd. David Bown,
5 Kenworthy Lane, Northenden, M 22 4 JF
0161 998 – 2158

Sunday Services.

Dec. 6th 11.00am Morning Worship **
6.30pm United Service at St.Wilfrid's (to avoid Players)
13th 11.00am Morning Worship
20th 11.00am Carol Service

Christmas eve service 5.00pm at one of the other churches in
the circuit.

25th 10.30am Christmas Day Service.

27th 11.00am Morning Worship

Jan. 3rd 11.00am Morning Worship
6.30pm United Service at Northenden Methodist Ch.

** The preaching plan was not available when our dates and
details had to be sent in for publication.

Community Lunches ...

... Wednesday 16th Dec, from 12.30pm

Christmas Dinner, by ticket only, price £7.00.

Northenden Players.

The Players' next production is

Hindle Wakes, by William Stanley Houghton,
beginning on Sunday December 6th, and then 8th-12th
in the Hall at Northenden Methodist Church, Victoria Rd.

For details or booking, ring 445-6868

St.Wilfrid's Church,

Ford Lane. (Off Church Rd.)

Rector: Greg Forster (998-2615)

Organist: Arthur Mellor (928-0472)

www . stwilfridsnorthenden . org . uk

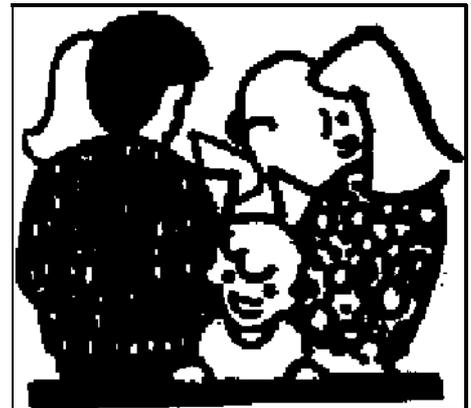
Services:

Communion on Sundays at 8.00am

and on Thursdays at 10.00am

There is 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.



Dec. 6th 10.30am Family Communion & Parade Service
 6.30pm United Service at St. Wilfrid's (to avoid Players)

13th 10.30am Holy Communion
 6.30pm Evening Worship

20th 10.30am Holy Communion
 3.00pm Carol Service.

24th Christmas Eve. 11.30pm "Midnight" Communion

25th Christmas Day
 8.00am Holy Communion
 10.30am Family Communion

27th 10.30am Holy Communion
 6.30pm Evening Worship

Jan. 3rd 10.30am Family Communion
 6.30pm United Service at the Methodist Church.

Drop in ... 2 – 5pm.
 St. Wilfrid's church is open each Sunday
 (**except 20th & 27th**)
 from 2.00 – Dusk,
 for prayer and peace, visiting and just looking round, enquiries
 about baptisms, weddings, ancestor hunting, ... &c.

It's All Happening ..., for your diaries ...

Don't forget Northenden's very own Farmers' Market,
 on the first Saturday of the Month ~
 food that's good for you and good for the village.

Mon. 30th Nov. 7.00pm Women's Group Christmas Party
 Wed. 2nd Dec 8.00pm, Rectory ~ Bible Study
 Thursday 3rd Dec. Carol & Folk Music concert, 7.30pm in church
 Sat. 5th Chapters Special, 10.00am – noon, with CARDS
 Wed. 9th 8.00pm Bible Study @ Rectory.
 Thu. 17th 9.15am (ish) School Christmas Service
 NB. No Bible Studies till 13th January.

Fees, 2010

~ Greg Forster

A note from the Archbishops' Council warns us that there are as usual some increases from January in the standard fees for special services in church. Basic funerals, in fact, remain the same at £99, as does the reading of banns for a wedding elsewhere (£34), but the wedding itself will cost £6 more at £355.50 overall. (There may be variations if you follow non-standard legal procedures, but I will explain all that if necessary). Posters giving fuller details will be put up in church.

FROM THE REGISTERS;

Married in the Parish Church on Sat. 24th Oct.

Jennifer Amy Shortall to Aiden Stuart Thomas

In Memoriam ...

Dennis Rowland (Howard Rd.) 89

Jack Ashton (Greenpark Rd.) Oct. 11th 2009.

Christmas decorations.

Over the past few years we have decorated St. Wilfrid's with Poinsettias over Christmas. The red and green leaves are so striking, and those colours are so seasonal. If anyone would like to share in doing so again this year, please bring a plant with you to any of the services after 13th Dec. (Not before, or the leaves will have dropped!)

Magpie ...

... has heard a rumour that canoes, four of them, were seen on the river at the beginning of November, despite quite a lot of water after the rains. Splendid! More strength to their elbows, shoulders, knees, backsides, and whatever else goes into paddling your own canoe. They seem to have come from up-river. The base for canoeing here in Northenden continues to be developed.

... was amused by the advertising strap line on a Christmas mail order catalogue:

Suppliers to Father Christmas since 1973.

... was rather perturbed in early November when someone said to him that there were people suggesting that various Church activities around Christmas should be cancelled because people would be too busy getting ready for Christmas. What is Christmas about, anyway?

... noted the first Christmas decorations in the streets of Manchester, and the houses of Northenden, in mid-November. I suppose there are some people who need a lot of time to get the lights up. The imagery is interesting. Stars are OK, (five-pointed, at least) because they are not religious. Trees are OK, since no-one realises their ancient religious significance. Santa is OK because no-one realises he is a Saint; he's just a member of the sales force. If he sits in a crescent moon that's OK, because we're not very familiar with Muslim symbols ~ or have they simply confused him with the man in the moon? Just nobody mention Jesus!

... and talking about confusion, back around Hallowe'en time someone on one of the music radio stations was busily wishing everyone a very happy Hallowe'en celebration, like you do, and added the information that it was something to celebrate because it was originally all about harvest festival. Oh, dear! Bringing the cattle down off the hills perhaps, but not harvest.

... several people in Northenden received consultation papers about improvements to the bus services from East Didsbury to Salford and Middleton. It looks good, but why ask us? Let's add an improved spur from Withington village down Palatine Rd. to benefit Northenden and Wythenshawe too. There's a rumour too that the 370 has been curtailed evenings.

Unemployed due to ill health?

Are you, or is someone you know, in this position? The Government has a new scheme to help such people get back into work, and in this area it is being put into action by a group called Sencia. They can offer career advice, support once you are back in work, advice on benefits and support grants available, and on how to prepare your CV, and much more.

They have a website, www.sencia.co.uk, or ring Neil Jones on 07525 903 822.

Folk Music and Carols for the Christmas Season ...

with Kieron Hartley and Friends on

Thursday December 3rd

at 7.30pm in St. Wilfrid's.

The proceeds from this will go to the Booth Centre, Manchester Cathedral's work among the street people of the City.

Christmas Gifts

And while we're talking about the Booth Centre, we hope again this year to collect soup and other simple food, and hats, gloves, socks and other warm men's clothing or blankets for use by the Booth Centre and similar projects with their clients. Bring them to Church, or contact Greg or Sue Forster before Dec. 19th.

PS. We have had thank you notes and a certificate of appreciation from them for previous donations at Harvest, &c.

Safety Advice ...

... if you get meals-on-wheels delivered by BCM you may already know this, but if not, the advice they are circulating in conjunction with the neighbourhood policing team is well worth noting. There is sadly a danger from bogus callers, who pretend to be officials of some kind, but are not. This is the core of the advice on offer:

- * Contact your utility company to take advantage of any password security schemes available. Some companies will set up a password that only you and the company know, this means that when they call by you will know that they are genuine

- * Stop and think before you open the door. If possible, look out of the window or use a door viewer (spy-hole) to check whether you know the caller. If you do decide to open the door, remember to put the chain on

- * Ask to see an identification card and check it carefully, but ensure you close the door on the caller while doing this

- * If you have not got a door bar or chain, ask the caller to push their identity card through the letterbox, then check the photograph corresponds to the caller

- * Call the company concerned to verify the identity of the caller, but do not rely on the number given to you as this may be fake. Look it up yourself in the phone book

- * Do not open the door until you are happy with the caller's

identity. If you still have any doubts, ask them to call back when a family member, friend or neighbour can be present.

* Genuine callers would never wish to cause distress, and would be happy to call again

* Keep all external doors locked at all times, whether you are at home or not.

At St.Wilfrid's we have also got a small supply of security devices ~ personal alarms and light-timers ~ given us by the police to be passed on to elderly or vulnerable people. Please ask if you would like one.

A Year of John.

Greg Forster

Many of you will know that in the Church of England "Lectionary", or set reading scheme for each year, we follow one of the first three Gospels throughout the year. It is called a "semi-continuous" scheme, and I must say that sometimes it is more semi than continuous. For various reasons John's Gospel is left out of this cycle, and gets used on a rather more erratic basis from time to time.

I am not happy to sideline John in this way, only bringing in some favourite passages when the lectionary-writer feels like it. So, for one year only, you will get a "Year of John" if you worship at St.Wilfrid's. The scheme I have prepared uses the whole of the Gospel, linked when appropriate to the season of the year, and otherwise working through the book section by section, with Epistle or Old Testament readings which link up with John's ideas or the season.

I'm not happy to
sideline John

One of the reasons for pushing John to one side is a feeling that some people have had that he is somehow more ethereal or spiritual, and less factual, than the other three, which simply tell you the plain story. That is to misunderstand both John and the others. Their style and method is different, but the spiritual message is still there: the blind man Bartimaeus sees who Jesus is, and follows him, while those who ought to see are blinded by arguments over status. (see Mark 10) In John another blind man is given his sight, and Jesus then gets involved in long conversations with him and others about people who think that they have spiritual insight, but don't (John 9). The difference John invites us to listen to the details.

is not that John is more "spiritual", but that he makes the point through extended discussion and teaching, whereas the other three are more likely to use a short soundbite. They give us the headlines; John invites us to listen in to the details.

Another reason people give for treating John's gospel differently from the others is that they think he is less accurate. Strangely, the ancient world would have seen things the other way round. John does give dates; John does give detailed directions (one writer has suggested he knew ancient Jerusalem like a London cabbie knows his city!) And, for the record, he does tell stories about specific events ~ healings, miracles, "signs" just as the others do ~ but he then recalls the discussions which followed them, and there, embedded in those discussions, we do find sayings which echo the soundbites of the other gospel writers.

What you can say about John is that he does not duplicate the other three (except in a couple of places, and of course in the events around Jesus' death and resurrection ~ the heart of the Gospel message.) Is that because he did not know the "full story", or why? Perhaps there were some of the events in Mark's Gospel and the others which he did not know of at first hand. There was a reason for that. But also, I think he knew Mark's Gospel, and deliberately set out to write what we might call a "supplement", in contrast to the intention of Luke or Matthew which seems to be to produce a "second, amplified edition." Let me illustrate. Mark begins with "The beginning of the Gospel ..." and describes John the Baptist's ministry and Jesus' baptism. John, you might say, says, "OK, let's really get to the beginning of all this; God's Word, who was Jesus, was there right at the beginning, before anything else ever was. That's the true starting point of this Good News which we are witnessing to." (Mark ch. 1 & John ch. 1)

John writes a "supplement" to Mark's gospel.

So who was John? If you had asked me that a couple of years ago I would have argued that he was John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee and probably Jesus' cousin. That does make sense of some of the internal evidence in the book, and was one of the strongest portraits that the post-New Testament church painted of him. I would now suggest differently, having followed the arguments of Richard Bauckham, who was once a professor

here in Manchester. He develops the other suggestion of the early Church, that this was another John, known as "the Elder", who lived in Jerusalem during Jesus' ministry. Hence he is able to bear witness (in a favourite phrase of his) to what he saw there, even if he does not attempt so much detail about Galilee.

So John offers us seven signs which indicate who Jesus was and is ~ the other gospels call them mighty works, and use them to show Jesus' power; John invites us to go deeper: what does the miracle point to? The one who gives sight is the Light of the world, for instance. The one who feeds 5000 is himself the "bread of life", the true sustenance of mankind. There are seven titles like that, backed up and justified by these signs, but there are also seven occasions where Jesus simply says "I am" ~ or in more idiomatic English, I'm the One, or That's me. You will find the same in Mark too, if you look, but it isn't quite so clear and organised. For us "that's me" sounds simply like a way of answering a question ~ "We're looking for Jesus." But a Jew like John would also recognise God's self-revelation in Exodus ch.3 ("I am has sent you") and also in Isaiah chs 40 – 55. ("I am He")

So John gives us his evidence, and he is vouched for by people who did know his name (see the end of ch. 21) even if we are not sure. He writes that evidence down so that we have grounds to believe in Jesus as Lord and God, and be blessed in that belief. (See chapter 20.) He is an eye witness ~ perhaps the last eye-witness, which is why he wrote so that his testimony should not be lost ~ and he invites us to take up Jesus's offer, that those who believe in him ~ in his nature and authority ~ should have the power to become children of God. (ch. 1 v12)

"These things are written that you may believe in him, and believing may have eternal life."

So take a look at John's Gospel yourselves; read it chapter by chapter, or at a single sitting, or week by week as we look at it in St.Wilfrid's (I can let you have the scheme I am using if you ask). Read it as a dramatic story (not just as a pious duty), and let it get into you and enliven you!

Money Matters.

Greg Forster.

St. Wilfrid's

Just a note, which really applies to St. Wilfrid's but I don't mind members of other churches looking over my shoulder. I was feeling rather pleased with the church finances this year. We seem to be receiving more than last year, and we might break even, though there are some big heating bills still to sort out. That's what it looked like in mid November, anyway. So thank you!

But then I saw figures comparing St. Wilfrid's with other churches, and with our potential. Church members will be familiar with the "planned giving" scheme. It brings in about £10,000 a year to the church, for which we are grateful. But that works out as less than £4.00 per week per scheme member. There are other churches in the area, with fewer advantages than St. Wilfrid's, where scheme members are, on average, contributing almost twice that amount.

I know everyone's circumstances are different, so will not labour the point, except to say that I was surprised at the figures, having thought we were doing quite well.

A point that I will labour, since it has been made over the last couple of years at the time of annual reports, is that we are running a deficit on our routine running costs ~ spending more than is coming in ~ by several thousand pounds a year, and can only do that for so long. It will be more difficult this year since interest on our investments is less than in past years. Perhaps we have relied too much on that. More another time!

ARE YOU HEARING ME?

If you use a hearing aid you will know that we have had trouble with the loop system at St. Wilfrid's recently. That has now been sorted out, thanks to Alec Sumner, whose electronic shop is on Palatine Rd. Thanks.

COPENHAGEN. DECEMBER 2009. G.S.F.

The "Flood" signs are out in Ford lane for the first time this autumn, and I've just seen a very bedraggled bumble bee. It's Nov. 18th. Floods are hardly new in Ford Lane, but are a reminder of the awesome power of the elements. Whether the bee at this date is a sign of global warming or just a late survivor, I don't know. Whatever, they are playing down the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this December. It won't produce anything binding; it will just come up with some aspirations. And there are those who claim that global warming is just something that goes in cycles anyway, so why worry? It does go in cycles, but not, so far as the geologists can tell, quite so dramatically fast as now and, as someone said, we only have

one earth to experiment with. If we get it wrong we can't go back to our control sample and try again.

As you know, I hope we might be able to do something ~ just a little ~ about it all at Northenden weir; we're still waiting to see if it can be done safely, given the level of floods we can get here. As for Copenhagen, pray that the aspirations get firmed up more than they are saying; otherwise there may be fewer countries to reach agreement by the time they get that far. Sea level changes are threatening the Maldives, and others.

In Remembrance. G. S. F.

I wondered, on Remembrance Sunday, how we ought to "remember" the dead of past wars, the holocaust, and such horrors. Some things are obvious, such as the poppies and the thanksgiving services, and even the proper care of those injured or bereaved in present conflicts. But if it is just a matter of symbols, or the "military covenant", have we remembered enough? In the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5 v.15) remembering leads to practical fellow-feeling in the here and now to help people with disadvantages. Remembering is action now.

It is easy to see the link between soldiers in 1914 or 1940 and soldiers now. It is popular too, if only because they can seem victims of politicians and bureaucrats. But are there other, perhaps less popular settings where fellow-feeling should inspire practical remembrance? The 'holocaust' affected not only Jews but the mentally disturbed. They were put out of their misery. Is our current easy drift towards accepting euthanasia, for instance, even if it is voluntary, heading in that direction? Bear it in mind!