

# CONCORD ~ December 2014

Prayer for the Month,

When the King of all creation had a cradle on the Earth  
holy was the human body, holy was the human birth;  
who can tell what other cradle high above the milky way  
still may rock the King of Heaven on another Christmas Day?  
I will praise the Son of Mary, brother of my blood and bone;  
God above, man below; holy is the name I know.

*A Carol of the Universe ~ Sydney Carter*

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane.

0161 **998 2615**

Dear Friends,

December begins and we are drawing near the Christmas season (already!) which prompts me to mention what is now a regular appeal ~ for soups and other easy to prepare items which can be passed on to the Booth Centre for the benefit of the city's rough sleepers, and also for blankets, pullovers or the like for them. Bring what you can in early December, so that we can get it to the Booth Centre in good time.

Another Christmas tradition that has developed here over the past few years is the use of Poinsettias as decorations in church for Christmas. If you would like to donate one plant to go in church for the Carol service and over the festival (no more ~ leave other people a chance to give too) bring it to church on 14<sup>th</sup>, or during that following week, in time for festive events beginning on 18<sup>th</sup>.

So an early "Happy Christmas" to all our readers. We look forward to worshipping with you at the Christmas services in the Methodist or C. of E. church or the Friends' Meeting here in Northenden. Details are printed later in this issue, of course.

And another plug, connected with Christmas. Last year I produced a couple of Christmas books, *The Other Shepherd's Tale* (for children) and *Long Time Ago in Nazareth* (for grown ups). They each take a look at the Christmas story from a slightly quirky angle, but are well worth reading (I think so, anyway!). Available in St. Wilfrid's Church.

But now read on.

**Greg Forster**

## CHRISTMAS !

*Greg Forster*

I can't help admiring the technical skill and vision which has put the lander Philae on that comet. It is a shame it ended up in too much shadow, but some awesome data has been transmitted back, nonetheless ~ data that may carry us back to what was there at the beginning of this solar system. And this has led to discussion about little green men (good journalistic copy, but highly improbable!) and more seriously, about amino-acids ~ the first hints of life. People are looking for a scientific origin-myth: where do we come from? Are we star-dust? Will we be any more significant if we are than if those amino-acids first took shape on this planet?

Fascinating, and whatever the answer, "Wow!" or perhaps more Christianly, "Alleluia!" We are part of God's creation, and it is awesome and magnificent, whatever its precise details. "When I consider the heavens, the works of your hands," wrote the psalmist perhaps 3000 years ago, "what is humanity? Why do you take notice of us?" Compared to the vastness of space-time creation we are so insignificant.

But significance is not measured just in terms of size. As a Christian I believe it is also measured in terms of God's interest and attention. The psalmist was aware of this; the Christmas message affirms it even more clearly. God does bother with us on our third rock out from the sun.

That totally orthodox affirmation is what Sydney Carter was making in his quirky way with the carol that I have used as this month's prayer/meditation at the head of the issue. Whether there are amino-acids, or even little green men, on some other third rock out is interesting speculation. The question that we have to answer, and the celebration we are called to share in and enjoy, is about the Son of Mary. What will we do not just about his birthday but about his teaching? And what about his claims to show us God in person and to put us back in touch with God?

And more than that. We do not need to look for a scientific origin-story which makes us seem more important (though it is still worth while looking). Our value already rests with the way God has created us and wants to bring us back into friendship with him. And if, as Christians believe, God was somehow in Christ, bound up totally in his being, then in Carter's words, Holy is the human body, holy is the human birth. Happy Christmas!

## Magpie ...

... has heard talk about who goes to Church schools nowadays. He can't talk about Church Schools generally, but he has seen some figures about St. Wilfrid's school which he can share without breaching any confidences. Thirty-five children left the school in July, going to a dozen or so different secondary schools in Manchester, Cheshire, Trafford and Stockport. Of them fifteen had come from outside Northenden parish, though they may have started their school careers seven years ago living here, or may have joined the school part way through the primary stages as they moved or others left. And of them all, only two or three got their places on the grounds of Church membership. St. Wilfrid's is a local school, serving its wider area, with a church flavour and drawing people in by its good reputation. It is not an exclusive school just for church members. That remains the case with the current year's intake of (now) 52. Most were already in the school's nursery class, some coming from outside the parish, but most from locally. About half a dozen gained their places because of a church connection, but most are local, even though other local children have not been able to find places.

... so Magpie has a top tip for parents (and grandparents) of children who will be four before August 2015 ~ get your applications in now for the primary schools of your choice to start in Sept. 2015; the council's website is now open for applicants. (or get a paper copy to send in.)

... mentioned a fire, last month, at No.1 Church Rd. Since then there have been a couple of other blazes, far more serious than that one. Northenden Golf Club went up in smoke, and was so badly damaged that it was totally demolished within the week for safety's sake. And then on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. the hall at Northenden Community School was burned out; the fire affected the roof, on which repair work was being done at the time, but left the classrooms safe and usable after a good clean. People have immediately begun putting two and two together and suggesting that there is a sinister pattern to this. All Magpie can say is that the official word on the Golf Clubhouse is that the cause was electrical, and the school's website, updated following fire service inspections and confirmed by the new police area inspector, Mr. Breakspear, told us that it was not suspicious.

... a sad note, however, has come from the present head teacher at the Community School, Ian Beard. A day or so before the fire he had received a message telling him that a previous head there, Mr. Payne, had died. He retired in 1981, but there will still be people in Northenden who remember his work with themselves or with their children.

... and an ironic note from Facebook. In order to register appreciation for a message or picture, you apparently have to "like" it. So a number of people indicated that they "liked" the fire at the school, and the pictures of it. Oops!

... has again flown past the Tatton Arms, and is pleased to see that most of the boarded up window have now been painted black, which strangely does soften the 'derelict' appearance of the place. As for future developments there ... who knows. The November meeting of Northenden Neighbourhood Forum voted to oppose any encroachment on green-belt land, and at its separate meeting the Civic Society did the same.

... in Northenden Christmas comes on 25<sup>th</sup> Dec., but in Trafford Park things are different. As Magpie flitted through its broad avenues he saw a wall of snow (well, probably dense white plastic foam) emblazoned with the word Christmas and the dates **15<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> November**. But it was outside the Events and Exhibition Centre.

### **"We will remember them" 1914-1919 ~ G.S.F.**

In this issue we conclude the series of pieces about people remembered in the church or churchyard who were caught up in World War 1. But another thing that is bound to come up in the media this Christmas time will be the so called Christmas Truces, which occurred spontaneously along the front line in Flanders in December 1914. These were not organised, and the top brass disapproved. Units that had fraternised with the enemy in this way were moved rather further than usual in the routine rotation of battalions in the next couple of weeks.

Active hostilities died down on Christmas eve, and units across no-man's land heard carol singing from the opposite trenches, not least, I understand, *Silent Night/Stille Nacht*. Cautiously people looked over the parapets, called across, and (the story goes) ended up swapping cigarettes, schnapps and

rum, and playing games of football between the trenches (a foretaste of the 1966 World Cup? But did anyone keep the score? Did anyone think it was all over now?) Rifles and artillery stayed silent for a day or so after, till the units rotated. At that stage in the war the line infantry still felt a certain comradeship, whatever their leaders said. Modern commentators, perhaps with starry eyes, ask "what if?" questions.

There is no mention of this in Northenden Parish Magazine. The Rector had not by then signed up to the colours, so is looking on from afar. What he does refer to is appeals for "comforts" for wounded soldiers, and adult members of the church were encouraged to leave gifts of tobacco or chocolate for the benefit of those convalescing in the Withington Union hospital at a gift day on 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1914. A similar effort features in 1917.

A year later Hamilton was in France, and he reports a busy if strange celebration of the festival: many soldiers taking early communion behind the lines; all who were not on duty joining a special Christmas dinner, which (he notes as a censor of his unit's letters home) was much enjoyed. The French cafés reaped a good harvest, he writes, and the French were surprised at "the importance attached to Christmas festivities by our cheery and I'm glad to say well behaved men. Sing songs, a power of smoking, finally the toast to 'absent friends,' lights out and bed by 9.00pm was the usual order of things on this strange Christmas Day."

### **Sgt. Ernest Leigh, M.M.**

There are many sad stories in the parish magazine for the war years, but there are also some happier ones. In June 1918 Sgt. Leigh is recorded in the "roll of honour" as killed in action. He had joined up in November 1914, serving with the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Manchester Regiment, and had earned promotion. In the thick of things in 1917 he was, as a corporal, awarded the Military Medal (the equivalent of the Military Cross for non-officers, and in honour just behind the DCM) though "with a soldier's reserve and modesty he would give no particulars or account of his gaining this honour." This battallion of the regiment was in action on the Flanders coast, at Poelcapelle and at Ypres that year. No details of the reason for the award are gazetted, other than that it was for bravery in the field. His reticence is typical, not so much

perhaps from modesty as from a horror at reliving the events, or a reluctance to scare the ladies and children (or even the clergy!)

The magazine reports that on March 21<sup>st</sup>, the first day of the German spring offensive, he was killed in action. A fellow sergeant wrote, "I was with him a few minutes before he went forward into action of 21<sup>st</sup>, with the same fine spirit and splendid courage that he always showed." He had a wife, and two small children, as well as his parents. He seems to have lived in West Didsbury, though Leigh is a Northenden family, and the ringers from Christ Church rang a muffled peal at St. Wilfrid's in his memory on 12<sup>th</sup> May.

Yet the next month there is happier news; letters had been received from him to say that he was a prisoner of war, though he had been badly wounded. Sgt. Leigh survived and came home after the armistice. The magazine for February 1919 records his return, having been in a camp at Brandenburg. The treatment of prisoners is described as "in a few cases even fairly good, and in many cases it seems to have been as bad as possible." But then, Germany was suffering a blockade by then, and hardship and shortages were normal, as in the UK. Twelve returning prisoners are reported, and they and their families were entertained to a dinner and entertainment at the Rectory on 23<sup>rd</sup> January.

### **Another shore ...**

Most of the family memorials in our Churchyard record someone "killed in France", but not all. L/Cpl. Thomas Steele died in Mesopotamia ~ Iraq to us now ~ in an earlier Gulf War, against the Turks. His obituary in the magazine for May 1918 records that he was among the first in Northenden to join up, with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Manchester Regt. He served in France, was invalided home for a while, then rejoined his unit at Cleethorpes before embarkation for Egypt and then Mesopotamia. He was again hospitalised in Alexandria, before 18 months' hard soldiering in "Mess-pot." Again forced to report sick he spent some weeks in hospital before contracting pneumonia, dying on 21<sup>st</sup> March. He seemed on the mend, from a letter sent by his hospital chaplain, but evidently he had held on too long and had not the reserves to pull through. "Thomas Steele" (the magazine confides) "was a keen member of our cricket club, and his cheery manly nature won him many friends wherever he went."

George Wrightson is also mentioned in May 1918. He was the first from Northenden to die at sea, having joined the Navy, on a 12 year enlistment, in 1915. He served, with distinction it is said, in destroyers and had many thrilling experiences. The ship was on a special operation on March 27<sup>th</sup> when she hit a mine, and went down in two minutes, with serious loss of life. He had shown great promise, and the magazine expresses sympathy to his parents at the loss of their only son at the age of 19.

The magazine in Sept. 1917 records not only the dead, but also some of the injured from the parish. And it records the humorous side of home leave: "By one man on leave, sleeping for the first time in many a long night in a bed, the Northenden bus, thundering past, was taken for a Tank ~ with sad results to the bedroom furniture."

Not all our war dead died in France in the heat of battle. Cpl. Sydney Bethell lies beneath a Commission headstone, but here in Northenden. He served in France with 3<sup>rd</sup> Cheshires in 1914, but was invalided home in early 1915. His injuries proved too severe, and he was discharged from service in March 1917 with lung and heart trouble. He died, at the Borough Hospital in Hyde, in December 1917, aged 23, and was buried with military honours. With lung trouble, one wonders if he had been gassed.

It seems fitting to end this series almost where we began, with a story from Joyce Blackburne, and also to tell a story with a happy ending ~ not all war stories are dire. It was last February that I told the story of her father, injured in France. She also had an uncle, Harvard Thane, who was serving in Belgium, near the coast. Some of the local girls felt it their duty to bring home comforts (principally tea) to their gallant defenders, and in the course of these visits romance blossomed between Uncle Harvey and Lydie. Her parents were wary. "You don't know anything about these soldiers. You don't know where they come from." But in due course he and some friends were invited home for a meal. He proposed, but could not produce a ring, out there near the front. They wanted to know more, and enquiries were made into the family tree ~ which turned out to have its roots way back in 11<sup>th</sup> century Scotland. There's not many prospective grooms that can produce that kind of pedigree, and they obviously approved. After the war he returned to Belgium to marry her, to settle, and to bring up two children.

# Northenden Methodist Church

Minister: The Revd. Tim Nicholls,  
5 Kenworthy Lane, Northenden, M 22  
0161 **945-6600**

## Sunday Services.

*Usually# 1st Sunday every month*

Family worship ~ Sunday breakfast club ~ MESSY  
CHURCH

All start off with activities with your child(ren) followed by a  
story, songs, and prayer based on the activities  
For details contact Amy Carline, 07816 888 704

Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> **No Messy Church today ... but see 16<sup>th</sup>.**  
11.00am Morning Worship \$  
6.30pm United Evening Service & St. Wilfrid's

## Carol Singing **Tues. 9th Dec. at 3.30pm**

We plan to sing carols on a separate occasion this year,  
walking along the high street stopping at points, raising money  
for Action for Children. We will start at Morrisons in Northenden  
and walk towards the Methodist church, ending with mince pies  
and drinks at the church.

Sun. 14<sup>th</sup> 11.00am Morning Worship.

## Christmas Messy Church **Tues. 16th Dec., 3.30 - 5.30pm**

Christmas Crafts and nativity at the church. Bring nativity  
costumes to dress up in and share. We will be running a 'Bring  
and Share' food session so please bring something along to add  
to the table.

Sun. 21<sup>st</sup> 11.00am Morning Worship ... and ...

## Cristingle Service **Sun. 21st Dec. at 4pm.**

Join us for a candle lit service at Northenden Methodist  
Church to make your own cringle, and yes you can take it  
home and eat it afterwards.

## Crib and Carols **6.30pm on Wed. 24<sup>th</sup> Dec.**

Traditional carol service at Lawton Moor Methodist Church.

25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day

10.30am Morning Service

Sun. 28<sup>th</sup> 11.00am Morning Service

**Jan.** 4<sup>th</sup> 11.00am Morning Service

6.30pm United Service at Methodist Church.

11<sup>th</sup> 11.00am Morning Service \$

\$ The Preaching plan is not available at the time of printing.

**Community Lunches**

Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> 12.00 noon – 1.30pm

(watch for notices. Details to be confirmed ~  
Christmas arrangements & pre-booking apply.)  
Next lunch; Wed. 14<sup>th</sup> Jan. (To be confirmed)

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**Northenden Theatre Club** have performances on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> -  
13<sup>th</sup> and Febr. 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>. in the Methodist Church Hall, Victoria Rd.

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**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 Enid Pinch, 445 6778

The main hall and smaller rooms are available for hire;  
~ contact Peter Todhunter (Meeting House Warden) 834-5797

**Carol Service; Christmas Day ~ 10.30am.**

**Appleacre Land Care** ~ John, the father of Esme and Tilly  
whose baptism is noted in the St. Wilfrid's pages below, is offering  
a free garden care service (donations welcome). Ring 07519-19-  
9323 and he will get back to you.

**St. Wilfrid's Church, Northenden.**

Ford Lane, M22 4WE

Rector ~ the Revd. Greg Forster,  
Northenden Rectory, Ford La., M 22 4NQ

Tel. 0161 998 – 2615

Email; gsf @ stwilfridsnorthenden . org . uk

Website: www . stwilfridsnorthenden . org . uk

*And follow us on Facebook (as they say) ~*

www. facebook. com/ pages/ St-Wilfrids-Northenden/ 208920952481082

## Services:

On Sundays there will be a communion service at 8.00am.

On Thursdays also, at 10am, there is a communion service.

**The Nigerian Anglican “Restoration” Congregation** meets weekly at **12.30pm** for about 1½ hours in St. Wilfrid’s Church.

The service includes traditional and modern music.

There are also activities for children.

**Note the Watch-Night Service on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, 9.00pm ...**

**Sunday Scramblers** ~ for 3½ to age 7 upwards ~ meet, for the moment, in the Church Hall unless there is a Family Service, between 10.30 and 11.30am Sundays (not 28<sup>th</sup> either).

Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Special Family & Parade Service

6.30pm United Service at St. Wilfrid’s.

14<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Holy Communion

6.30pm Evening Worship.

21<sup>st</sup> 10.30am Holy Communion

**1.00pm** United Carol Service

6.30pm Evening Worship

24<sup>th</sup> 11.30pm Christmas Eve

“Midnight” Communion Service.

Thur. 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day

8.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Family Communion & Carols

Sun. 28<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Morning Prayer

6.30pm Holy Communion (1662)

**Jan. 4<sup>th</sup> 2015.** 10.30am Family Communion (& Carols)

6.30pm United Service at Methodist Church

11<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Holy Communion

6.30pm Evening Worship

**Drop in on St. Wilfrid's ...**  
**On Sundays from 2.30 till dusk ...**  
**... the church is open**  
**for private prayer, for enquiries, or just to look around.**  
To visit at other times, please contact the Rector.

Dates for your Diary ~ it's all happening!



**Note the Street Market 6<sup>th</sup> Dec., 10am ...**

All the fun of the fair, plus stalls and lights "switch on" at dusk.  
*(but not on Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup>.)*

**Women's Group ~ Christmas Party;**

Mon. 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. in the Rectory, 7.00pm

Bring yourselves, your guests, and food for half a person.

**Brownies' Christmas Fair, Mon. 8<sup>th</sup> Dec., 6.30pm-ish. Ch. Hall.**

The **School Cristingle** celebration will take place in church on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December at 2.00pm.

And their end of term, **Christmas Service** will be in church on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>., at about 9.15am.

On Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, New Year's Eve, note the **Watch Night** service arranged by the Nigerian Congregation, 9.00pm to 2015.

**P.C.C meeting** ~ Thurs. 15<sup>th</sup> January, 7.30pm. Hall

Registers ...



In Memoriam.

Eleanor Toft, 78, Winnie McGrath (Yew Tree Ave) 95

Baptised on Sunday November 2<sup>nd</sup>;

Simisola Olufela Jada Onasanya

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>

Natasha Selina Atassi-Holdsworth, Stella Maria Atassi-Holdsworth.

Esme Maureen Meehan, Tilly Ruth Meehan.

**Church Fees, 2015.**

The coming New Year is, of course, the traditional time for the revision of the fees and other charges made by the church for what are called "occasional offices" ~ that is weddings, funerals and other events which do not happen on a regular basis. These

are fixed at a national level, as a legal arrangement, rather than by St. Wilfrid's acting independently. The chart of the new fees is rather complicated, but roughly shows a five percent increase on 2014 ~ though there are some decreases for particular items! I can explain the details individually to anyone who wants to know.

### **More Memories? GSF**

While moving one of the frontals from the communion table at St. Wilfrid's for Remembrance-Tide I noticed that the panels set against its green background include red flowers. I wonder whether they are supposed to be poppies, and if so, whether that indicates that the green frontal was intended as a war memorial. Strictly, the flowers are not poppies, since they have five petals, not four, but embroiderers are not necessarily botanists. So I wonder if any of our older readers can remember when the green frontal was introduced, and whether it was intended in this way.

**The Rector's booklet, *We Will Remember Them*, is available from the Church. It prints some of these articles from Concord, with more information and colour photographs. Price (revised edition) £2.00**