

FEBRUARY 2007

Cover Picture; The previous archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, during a visit to Christians in the middle east – in this case in Jordan (I think) at a church-based clinic. See p.2 & 11.

Prayers for the Month,

Almighty and merciful Father,
whose love crosses continents and embraces people of all races
and cultures, whose church touches all nations and languages:

we pray for your protection and blessing on Christians in
those parts of the world where their faith is not respected, and
their beliefs are challenged or persecuted.

Bring peace to their countries and their communities; bring
hope where there is despair, loss or desperation;

Give strength and perseverance in the face of hardship, and
wisdom to know how to respond to what they face. *Amen*

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

Dear Friends,

Firstly, a piece of Concord admin! Thanks to everyone involved in its distribution last year and this, especially Jenny Roberts and Peter Hoyland who co-ordinate the first level distribution. If you have not already paid for the year, (unless you have some other arrangement with your distributor ~ some prefer to wait for lighter evenings before knocking on doors) the 2007 payment is due – still 35p per issue, £4.20 for the year.

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Around Christmas the archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, rightly caused some controversy by drawing attention to the problems faced by Christians in the Holy Land, in particular in Bethlehem, and by suggesting that some of those problems are a direct result of American and British foreign policy in the Middle East. He and other British Christian leaders visited Bethlehem, prayed in the church of the Nativity, and saw for themselves the effects of the Israeli security wall which isolates the town from its hinterland and from easy pilgrim access.

Predictably the Government issued a statement denying any responsibility. They would, wouldn't they? The fact

remains that across the Muslim countries from Pakistan to Egypt Christian churches, some of them older than Islam, and certainly older than the USA, are regarded as somehow Western agencies, and over the past three or four years have seen an upsurge in violence directed against people and buildings belonging to them. It may be populist, and ill-informed, with little or no government approval, but it is there, and the motive and excuse is "Iraq", whether that is rational or not. The Christian population of Bethlehem has drastically reduced (I cannot lay hands on the actual percentages, but it is something like a drop from 60% to 20% ~ if I can get the figures I will put them in a later Concord.) Similarly Iraqi Christians are seeking refuge outside the country, in the face of the murder of priests and other violence over and above what is happening generally in that sad country.

In our thoughts and prayers should be there for our fellow Christians from those countries with as much loyalty and concern as for our fellow countrymen, to say the least.

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Another cause for concern at present is the introduction of regulations in April concerning "equality" in the supply of services to homosexuals. This affects businesses, including those run from or at people's homes such as bed and breakfast accommodation. It also affects premises, such as a church hall.

My concern is not immediately whether homosexual activity is right or wrong. The fact that some people do believe it is wrong is relevant to what I have to say, while (for present purposes) whether it is wrong is not. What I am concerned about is the consciences of people who do believe it is wrong, and the way this regulation can ride roughshod over their consciences. It is ironic that a regulation designed to give gay people freedom to follow their consciences should remove that freedom from others. That irony is redoubled by the way in which a spokesman for Stonewall, the Gay campaigning group, suggested that the objections raised by demonstrators outside Parliament in January when this matter was debated by the Lords did not need to be taken very seriously, because no mainstream churches were involved or were objecting to the measure. In fact the Roman Catholic bishops have voiced great concern, and have (I gather) requested a meeting with Ruth Kelly, the minister responsible. That request has been ignored for months.

Does this matter? I think it does for two reasons. One is the way this allegedly liberalising and liberating measure is

being imposed so illiberally. It seems just another straw in the wind. I can see a situation in which we will live in a society where freedoms may be imposed on us all in a repressive way. The other is because the regulation almost invites abuse, as some campaigning group picks on a small and weak concern to make an example of them. This could be a charter for harassment.

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.

- 4th Feb. 11.00am Holy Communion, The Revd. Margaret Hall
5.30pm Evening Worship – United Service.
- 11th 11.00am Baptism (Anna Chapman). The Rev. D. Bown
- 18th 11.00am Mrs. Joyce Curtis
- 25th 11.00am. Mr. John Howell (Lent I)

COMMUNITY LUNCH ... ~

12.00noon – 1.30pm
on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month. (7th & 21st)

Fun Bingo: Sat. 24th Feb. at 12 noon till 2.00pm

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.

Benny ...

... has been sniffing around while Magpie takes a break

... and noticed a notice on the main road outside a pub:
"Patrons, please find the front door round the back." That's
almost as good as the Irish roadsign; "Start Stopping".

... went for a number of walks along the river Mersey while he was here; lots of wagtails to see ~ grey (they're yellowish) and pied (white on black) ~ and ducks and geese to chase. Mostly Mallard or Canada Geese, but there were three goosander, and three goldeneye too, and one lonely male Wigeon. There's a corbie crow near Palatine Rd. with grey and whitish wings. And another thing, which caught his nose, ... a dead sheep! Ugh! How many miles had that been washed down, and from where, in the pre-Christmas storms, before coming to a temporary rest underneath the Parkway bridge?

... heard an interview with Jay Garner, the American General who was given the task of organising Iraq after the invasion of 2003. Did his ancestors come from the Northenden area? Garner is certainly a North Cheshire name. Poor Gen. Garner! He was asked to do a task between January and March which he reckoned should take a year. Fergal Keane asked him about rumours that his work had been second guessed by people higher up the American Administration, and he confirmed that he had been told to ditch two people from his team, one of whom, he said, had been working on Iraq's situation for 18 months and seemed to know more about it than anyone else around. The orders, he understood, came from the Vice President, with no explanation. And then, the day after he got to Baghdad, he was told to hand over the reins to someone else. Enough said!

... noticed (at nose level, mark you) periwinkles, clover and primulas in flower over Christmas, and crocuses in early January.

... wonders just how many other insomniacs who listen to the Shipping Forecast at 00.45hrs or 05.20hrs have noticed how violent storm force 11 has cropped up rather more in the last couple of months than over the last decade. Is it with global warming that there is a lot more energy about in Hebrides, Fair Isle, Faeroes and S.E.Iceland?

... had his sleep disturbed – mind you, for this he doesn't mind that – by the barking of a vixen from the garden of the Old Rectory. Tally-ho! Yoicks! Or simply just Woof!

... discovered that there are some smart people in Northenden and the surrounding area. South Manchester Archaeological Research Trust (S.M.A.R.T.) is in the making, and the person to ask about it (them) is Andy Coutts. They were

mostly involved in the Dig Manchester project in Northenden last year, and if and when that is repeated (possibly in Wythenshawe Park) they are very interested, but if not, ... well the world, or at least that part of it called South Manchester, is their oyster. (Talking of oysters, did you know that lots of oyster shells were dug up on the site of the mill? Apparently they were ground up to go into chicken feed, to supply calcium for the egg shells. So now you know!)

... had a look at the old Barrow Motors / Car Options site in passing. The building is down, at last, but there's still a lot of rubbish and scrap on the site. He wouldn't want to sniff around too closely.

... has a vested interest in anything which aids animals, but was surprised to hear of a campaign (so it seemed) before Christmas against providing animals to help farmers and farming communities in parts of Africa. They drink all the water! They eat all the plants! They need vets who aren't there! And most condescending of all, They won't be looked after properly. Well, Benny knows people who know the people who started the idea of sending cows, and now many other kinds of animals to deprived families in Uganda and elsewhere. He knows that proper thought is given to care for the donated animals; he knows that proper arrangements are made to feed the new livestock without overgrazing and causing worse problems; he knows that families and communities where donated animals live value them highly. And he also knows that this year the children of the first families to receive sent cows have now graduated from university having benefited from the income generated by those gifts. And he has also heard say that the objectors were rather biased, having a doctrinaire objection of some sort to animal farming. No wonder their descriptions of what sent goats did was not in line with the real situation.

... came across a list of units of measurement in a crossword dictionary lately. Did you know there is a unit called a gigaflop? But what is it? The dictionary did not say! Is it the area covered by a large dog flopping down after a walk? the unsupported bulk of a fat cat? Or the number of mickeys extracted from crossword puzzlers by dictionary compilers before a rat is smelled?

... wonders what's in a name. The question arose as to what to call the "Linear Park" alongside the Mersey. Would "Riverside

Park" do? But then, that's what the nearby caravan park is called, and that might lead to confusion. "Merseyside" could cause confusion too. How about "Millside Park" (the computer spellchecker has just rejected that!) or perhaps "Weirside Park" (it doesn't like that either) but that could cause more confusion, couldn't it? Eh Pet? Any ideas? The old field-name for the mill island was Middup, but would that mean anything to anyone? and the park will be bigger than that, anyway. Work on it should start soon, if it hasn't already.

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,

Quaker Quest Manchester ... Feb / Mar. 2007.

If you'd like to find out more about Quakers, come along to Quaker Quest – a series of six "stand-alone" sessions at Mount St. Friends' (Quaker) Meeting House, 6 Mount St., Manchester City Centre (opposite the Central Library). Each session will begin at 7pm following refreshments at 6.30, and will finish at 9.15pm. Dates and topics are as follows:

Mon Feb. 5 th	Quakers and Worship
Mon. 19 th	Quakers and Faith in Action
Mon. 26 th	Quakers' Experience of God
Mon. March 5 th	Quakers and the Practice of Peacemaking
Mon. 19 th	Quakers and Christianity and the Bible
Mon. 26 th	Quakers and Equality.

Each session will include informal presentations by local Quakers, discussions and questions, experience of Quaker worship and an opportunity to browse literature.

For more details tel. 0161 834 5797,
or visit [www . manchesterquakers . org . uk](http://www.manchesterquakers.org.uk)

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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 Thursdays at 10.00am

There is a "Sunday Club" for 7 – 11+ year olds 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.

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| 4 th Feb. | 10.30am Family Communion & Parade service
5.30pm United Service at Methodist Church. |
| 11 th | 10.30am. Holy Communion
5.30pm Evening Worship |
| 18 th | 10.30am Holy Communion
5.30pm Evening Worship |
| Wed. 21 st (Ash Wednesday) | Holy Communion, 8.00pm |
| 25 th | 10.30am Holy Communion
5.30pm Holy Communion (1662) |
| 4 th Mar. | 10.30am Holy Communion (Standard)
5.30pm Evening Worship (united, at St.Wilfrid's) |

Mothering Sunday this year is on the 18th March, and the March Family Service and parade for cubs and brownies will be on that date. If you have had children baptised recently, or who attend Scramblers or Sunday Club you are also specially welcome then.

Times of evening services at St.Wilfrid's have changed as an experiment from 6.30 to 5.30pm during January and February. Will this fit more conveniently into people's timetables, so that you can come more easily? Please let us know. This will be reviewed and after 4th March there may be changes again.

***The church is open each Sunday from 1.45 – 5.15pm,
for prayer, visiting, enquiries, &c.***

"I t's all happening ..." ~ F or your D iaries

Sat. 3rd Feb Coffee Morning, 10am ... Church Hall
 Mon. 5th Women's Group, Rectory, 7.45 for 8.00pm
 Also School Governors' meeting, 6.00pm
 Wed. 7th Bible Study, Rectory, 8.00pm
 And also 14th & 28th.
 Tue. 13th Deanery Synod in St. Wilfrid's, 7.30pm
 Wed. 21st Ash Wednesday service ~ see above.
 Thu. 22nd PCC meeting (to be confirmed)
 Sat. 3rd Mar. Coffee Morning.
 Mon. 5th Mar. Women's Group (to be confirmed)

Confirmation: we have a date for a Confirmation in October ~
 Sun. 21st at 3.00pm, provisionally at St. Christopher's, Withington.
 Normally there is a service in late spring too, but we have not
 been given a date yet for that one.

Toy Service, and Christmas Fair ...

have received letters of thanks from Longsight Probation
 and Rusholme Social Services in connection with the toys which
 were collected at the Toy Service in early December 2006.
 Thanks again to everyone who brought gifts then, and to Muriel
 Langshaw for handling them.

And thank you too to everyone who was involved in the
 Christmas Fair back at the beginning of December. I gather £717
 was raised, while a good time, as they say, was had by all.

Greg Forster

CHURCHYARD

Just to ask those of you who left wreaths on graves at
 Christmas to visit again and tidy the wreaths up. Even holly is
 not evergreen, and wreaths "fade" ~ actually they go black.
 After 2nd Feb., the absolute end of the Christmas season in church
 terms, I feel free to clear such wreaths, if they have not been so
 bad as to warrant it before. G S F

From the Registers ...

In Memoriam ...

Najiba Murad Iskander (Firwood, and previously Iraq) 87.
 Clara Farwell (Wilmslow) 98.

ELECTORAL ROLL REVISION. GREG FORSTER

Every six years the Electoral Rolls, or membership lists, of
 all Church of England parishes are renewed completely, and 2007

is one of these years. People move, but the records do not always get updated; people go on the list for specific purposes, such as a marriage, and then move away. To keep our voting and other administrative lists up to date this revision takes place.

So, in late February and March everyone who is currently on the list and is still eligible will be asked if they wish to renew their membership, and anyone else who qualifies is also invited to fill in the forms.

This is a sign of commitment to the work and worship of St. Wilfrid's church. There is no "subscription" or other financial promise associated directly with the Roll, but we would hope that members realise the costs of running and supporting a church, and make other arrangements, perhaps through our planned giving scheme, to accept those responsibilities.

You are entitled to be on the Roll if you are a member of the Church of England or are in communion with it; and if you live within the parish of Northenden, or live elsewhere but regularly attend St. Wilfrid's, or if you would do so but for illness or disability.

Membership of the Roll gives you voting rights in the Church meetings, and if you live outside the parish, gives you the same rights to, for instance, marriage at St. Wilfrid's as if you lived within the parish. In addition, I sometimes use it as a mailing list in connection with special events or celebrations in Northenden. It is kept on a computer for this reason, and if you object to that, please indicate so when you fill in the form

I would encourage you to sign up if you do qualify, not least because the Roll is also used in part by church authorities to calculate the number of clergy allocated to the diocese, the number of seats the diocese has in General Synod, and such like, and also no doubt by the media in a rather crude measure of the strength of the church! So let me or Morfydd Eglen, our Electoral Roll Officer, know if you do not get a form but do wish to sign on.

SCRAMBLERS

Scramblers? What are they? Dare I mention the words Sunday School? I'm told that if they hear me say that they will levy a 50p fine, but Scramblers is (are?) a new look S*-y Sc*-I meeting in the Church Hall on Sundays at 10.30am for an hour or so (except when there is a family service in church.) More details from Joan Mycock on 998 3304 or Kathryn Morgan on 946 0024,

or on our church website, and via our email at [scramblers @ stwilfridsnorthenden.org.uk](mailto:scramblers@stwilfridsnorthenden.org.uk) There are leaflets giving more details, which you could pass on to friends and family.

Congratulations!

... to Olive Waters, a life-long member of St. Wilfrid's, who celebrates her 100th birthday on 23rd Jan. this year.

CHURCH HALL "DISABLED" ADAPTATIONS. G.S..F.

Anyone who has been in the Church Hall in the past few weeks cannot help but have noticed that we now have a lift installed to enable people in wheelchairs, pushchairs, or even (I suppose) with a heavy load to carry, to get up or down to the large hall. This is the final phase of the improvements (for which we expect a grant from the city council) which will make our toilets, escape routes and upper level suitable for all users, whatever their abilities. There are still (17/1/07) some technical details to be sorted out and final fittings to be put in place, but they should not take too long. I shall be very happy to see everything up and running after so long.

THERE IS A CHURCH IN IRAQ ... G.S..F.

... and for that matter in Palestine, and Egypt. That should not surprise us, though it does tend to get overlooked when we hear of Islamic extremists, or the Jewish/Muslim conflict. It should not surprise us, because that is where the church started, of course! The first kingdom ~ Edessa ~ to turn Christian as a nation was in what we would now call North Eastern Syria and North Western Iraq. There has been an unbroken continuity of Christian worship in the area since then, despite invasions, conflicts, attempted genocide, and changes in political and religious supremacy in the area. In Egypt the fathers of the 4th cent. Coptic church shaped our creeds.

Some of the Christians in the region belong to the ancient and original churches – Armenian, Syriac, Assyrian. Some continue to use the language of Jesus in their worship. Others have accepted links with western churches, either as a result of the Crusades, or through more recent church diplomacy. Others still (in Iran more so than the Arab countries) have responded to missionary work, not least from this country in the 19th century, so that there is a fragile Anglican church in that country, and also a united church in Pakistan with Anglican roots.

One of their problems is that their Christianity is identified by the majority population as a political alignment to the west and they are targeted when no other 'western' interest is near at hand. That is probably not surprising, despite both the ancient history ~ Coptic or Assyrian churches were there long before "the west" ~ and the recent history (Saddam Hussein at times seems to have favoured the Iraqi churches for his own ends. They numbered about 3% of the population before the war, while Tariq Aziz, one of his closest associates, is a Catholic.)

In Palestine and Israel all these ancient churches are represented, together with Roman and Greek communities from the times of the crusades and before, as well as Arab Anglicans. Our cover picture shows the previous Archbishop of Canterbury during a visit to churches in Jordan and the holy land some years ago. There are also Jewish Christians, some of whom prefer to be called Messianic Jews, who see in Jesus the fulfilment of their religious and historic aspirations. They too are easily misunderstood, and some face hardship because of their faith. It has been argued that the severe restrictions placed on Mordechai Vanunu, the nuclear technician who revealed the Israeli nuclear weapons programme and served time in gaol for that, are as much now because he has turned to Jesus as because of his breach of security.

So it is a complex picture (and I have hardly touched on it here!), but the point is that it is complex. Our fellow Christians are caught up in the problems of countries which tend to be portrayed as simply Muslim or Jewish. That false portrayal works the other way too, as Muslims perceive The West to equal Christian. As a result Arab Christians of various groups, whose roots go way back into Arab history, are tarred with a western brush. In both Palestine and Iraq the Christian communities have seen widespread emigration, as people quite naturally seek a safer setting for their families.