

CONCORD ~ February 2011

Prayer for the Month ...

Go before us, O Lord, in all that we do,
with your most generous help and support,
and guide us with your ongoing aid,
so that in all our efforts and actions ~
begun, continued and finished in you ~
we may glorify your holy name,
and finally, by your mercy and forgiveness,
receive everlasting life.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord; *Amen.*

One of the prayers set for this month in the Common Worship prayer book.

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane. 0161 998 2615

Dear Friends,

Welcome to another issue of Concord. Magpie reports on a number of developments in the village, and I have included an extended piece about basic Christian belief, linked to the many baptisms we do at St. Wilfrid's. (For the record, it was standing room only on 16th Jan. when four Northenden children were introduced to the Christian church and faith ~ *Christ-ened.*) I may develop it in future editions. And there is the usual mix of diary events, registers and reports.

Can I highlight the service at St. Wilfrid's on the Sunday nearest St. Valentine's day? ~ especially for those who are married, are planning to marry (or ought to be thinking about it!) See p.12.

Though I have not specifically written about it in this issue, can I mention, and ask your prayers for, Christians who face persecution or attack because of their beliefs, or because of their Christian conscience. You will recall the attacks on Coptic Christians (in Egypt) around Christmas, and media attention about the same time to the problems of Christians in Iraq and Pakistan. They are not the only ones to suffer ~ though to say this is not to underplay their suffering. Even in this country a Christian conscience is counted cheaper by the law than the rights of people with other ideas and other lifestyles. Our law needs to revisit the balance of different consciences.

Yours faithfully, **Greg Forster** (Rector)

Northenden Methodist Church

Minister: The Revd. David Bown,
5 Kenworthy Lane, Northenden, M 22
0161 – 998-2158

Sunday Services.

Feb. 6 th	11.00am	The Rev. J. Tresise	
	6.30pm	United Service @ St. Wilfrid's	
13 th	11.00am	Holy Communion	The Rev. D. Sanders
20 th	11.00am	Joyce Burgess	
27 th	11.00am	The Rev. Malcolm Purdy.	
March. 6 th	11.00am	Morning Worship	
	6.30pm	United Evening Worship	
13 th	11.00am	Morning Worship.	

Arrangements for services are a little uncertain beyond the end of February. Wythenshawe Methodist Circuit is going into partnership with the Bramhall Circuit, and it is not yet worked out how plans for preachments will be organised ~ but services will continue as usual.

Community Lunch

Weds. 9th Feb. 12 noon – 1.30pm

Also Weds. 9th March ~ to be confirmed.

Fun Bingo

Last Saturday of the Month (26th), 12.00 noon - 2.00pm.
(to be confirmed in weekly notices)

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 Roger Hensman, 980-5158.

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

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

Services:

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

On Thursdays at 10am there will also be a communion service.

We run "Scramblers" ~ which I mustn't call a Sunday School ~
for children from 3½ to 7 ~ in the Church Hall, ...

... and "Sunday Club" ~ for children from 7 upwards ~ in the
Rectory between 10.30 and 11.30am Sundays ...

... except 2nd when there is a Family Service in church.

Feb. 6th 10.30am Family Communion & Parade Service
6.30pm United Evening Service @ St.Wilfrid's

13th 10.30am Holy Communion ~ **St.Valentine's Day**
(Details next month ~ come specially if you were married here!)
6.30pm Evening Worship.

20th 10.30am Holy Communion +
6.30pm Evening Worship

27th 10.30am Morning Prayer
6.30pm Holy Communion

Mar. 6th 10.30am Family Communion & Parade Service
6.30pm United Service @ Methodist Church

Wed. 9th Ash Wednesday Service at 8.00pm in Church.

13th 10.30am Holy Communion
6.30pm Evening Worship

Drop in ...

On Sundays from 2pm till dusk the church is open,
for private prayer, for enquiries, or just to look around.

Dates for your Diary ~ it's all happening! (or not)

February

Wed. 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd. Bible Studies, Rectory, 8pm.

Sat. 5th **Farmers' Market**, 10 - 4.

Mon. 7th 7.00pm Women's Group. Rectory (see note below)
 Sat. 12th **CONCERT** Poynton Male Voice Choir
 In Church, 7.30pm retiring collection for church funds.
 Thurs. 24th 7.30pm Church Hall. PCC Meeting (to be confirmed)
 Sat. 26th. 10.00 – 11.30am Coffee Morning, Church Hall.
 (Includes sale of books, jams, &c.)
 Wed. Mar. 2nd 8.00pm Bible Study. Rectory. (to be confirmed)
 Sat. 5th. Remember the Farmers' Market, 10am – 4pm.
 Mon. 7th Women's Group, 7.45 for 8.00pm. Rectory.
Stuart Kearney ~ 31 years inside. (See note below)
 Wed. 9th Ash Wednesday: Service in Church at 8.00pm.

And a note for your diaries ~ Mothering Sunday is April 3rd this year,
 and Easter, almost as late as it can ever be, is 24th April.

The Parish Registers

Baptised at St. Wilfrid's ...

Sun. 16th Jan. Caleb Daniel Hill-Bowes, Jack Michael Carter
 Lola Mae Amara, Paige Louise Birchenough.

In Memoriam

Florence (Dolly) Lynes (Bagnall Walk) 84,
 Alice Bostock, 99, Carol Goodwin (Cranleigh Dr.) 66,
 Dorothy Taylor (Baguley) 84, Charlotte Brunt (92).

Women's Group.

The next date will be Mon. 7th February, 2011. At **7.00pm.**
 Yes 7.00pm, for another party. Come along and help us celebrate
 the birthdays of two more of our members ~ birthdays with a zero
 at the end of their ages.

And on 7th March we are back to the usual time of 7.45 for
 8.00pm; *Thirty-One Years in Prison!* Stuart Kearney will be talking
 about his experiences in prison, not as an inmate, I hasten to add,
 but as an independent Visitor. *S.D.F.*

Churchyard ...

Please keep an eye on your floral tributes: as I have often
 said before, when they fade or rot they cease to be tributes! If you
 do not move them, Christmas wreaths and decorations will be
 removed by 2nd Feb. (the final end of the Christmas season in some
 people's reckoning) if not before. Please put plastic flowers,

wreaths and wrappers in the **black** wheelie-bins at the East end of the church. The green bins are for vegetation only, not for plastic!

Magpie...

... Some American visitors to Oxford asked a friend to show them the oldest thing to see in the Town. He took them off to the north, away from the University and through some side streets. Eventually they came to a wide open space of rather drab looking grassland with horses grazing beside the Isis. "There you are," he said. "Porte Meadow." They looked puzzled, but their history professor friend explained that the common grazing there was referred to even before Norman castle near the centre of Town.

... which leads Magpie to ask his readers whether they could suggest the oldest feature in Northenden and its surrounds.

... and another question: how do you play a really unkind trick on someone who is impatient?

... has heard that the plans for a skate park or whatever near the river have been prepared by the powers that be for a site on the Cheshire ~ Northenden ~ side of the river, rather than in the obvious and far more spacious area on the Lancashire side. Even if there were space to do this properly, surely this is to make a big mistake of bringing exuberant young people too near houses and flats, and inviting more instances of the typical English problem of Elders Causing Annoyance. Someone has got his wires crossed here. Once again, the invitation to *watch this space* is appropriate.

... has been keeping his beady eye on the monstrous carbuncle on the Church Rd. corner. (He could hardly miss it, could he?) You have to be sorry for the developer, really. Even though many local people had noticed that it did not seem to be quite what the plans had said back in 2004 when they were originally discussed, and had helpfully drawn the Planners' attention to this back in November, and even though the Planners had helpfully visited and inspected the site on a number of occasions to discuss this, and had eventually found the original plans passed by the Council in 2005, ... In spite of all this local assistance the poor man suddenly discovers that things are wrong, and just as Christmas is coming up, too. Somehow the Architect has got it all wrong ~ you can't get the staff, you know ~ and has lost the original plans and sent another set to the builders, which include two flats too many in the loft (sorry, Penthouse suite). Oh, dear! Or was it the Steel

Erectors, who didn't read the diagrams properly ~ you can't get the staff, you know ~ and put those top girders in too long and too high? We may never know. At any rate, just before Christmas would have delayed things he realises the mistake, and honourably admits it and just manages to get an application in for retrospective permission to cover up these errors. Still, even clouds have their silver linings. These oversights could mean an extra £200K in profits from the sale of the flats if permission is granted. Costly mistakes! And an extra £3-4K per annum in Council Tax, of course.

... but the mistakes did not, it seems, include extra space for the cars of the occupants of these flats. Sixteen of them (or will it be thirty-two?) will have to fight over the six to eight places in the basement. Will they be auctioned off, we wonders. The rest will have to park on the streets. But what streets, we wonders.

... has been talking to the Rector about his bugbears. Yes, even rectors have bugs to bear. This one is to do with Green Bins. People keep on using the green bins in the churchyard for plastic. Admittedly, it is plastic *flowers* or plastic *flower-pots*, or plastic bags full of *soil* and *garden rubbish*, but they are plastic. And people have gone to a great deal of effort to put it there. Even with a black bin right beside them, with a lid that can be flipped open with a finger, they have forced open the lids of the green bins which have been locked shut to prevent this. But surely people know that green bins are for stuff that will rot down. The contents goes into a specially designed process at the waste disposal site at Sharston, where it is broken down and turned into useable compost within a few weeks. Plastic, even if the label says it is biodegradable, messes up the system.

... and talking of the Sharston Tip, progress is being made towards finishing the new set up there. The public Household Waste bunkers are up and running, and are a vast improvement on the old arrangement. The Green Waste composting system has been working for some months now, as has the glass and plastic recycling unit. They are justly proud of the quality of their rubbish! The glass is very clean and makes a good recycled product; they will show you the pipes and other products which come from our discarded drinks bottles. And the Anaerobic Digester, which takes organic waste and turns it into gas which is burned to create electricity is undergoing checks and tests even as you read this.

... oh, and what about that oldest feature in Northenden? I suggest it is the wide roadside verge along Wythenshawe road beside the Park. That is part of the ancient common grazing of Northenden Moor, which has never been enclosed or managed to any great extent, though trees have been allowed to grow. As such it is older even than the church tower.

... and the unkind trick? There's no space left. I'll have to leave telling you that till another edition of Concord.

Basic Christianity ...

I was talking to some people about baptism and Christian belief in general, and what it might mean to be baptised as an adult, and I promised to find a booklet which would answer those points simply. I was in a Christian bookshop the next day, and looked round quickly. I probably did not look hard enough, but I confess I did not find anything obvious. However, it set me thinking about what such a booklet should contain. Every point I wanted to make led on to others, but some things are, you might say, core material.

There is the recognition that there is a God, of course, though some people have suggested that you can focus on Jesus and what he said and did (again, a core point) and actually forget a God out there! But no ~ we do talk about a God who is there, who is personal ~ not just a force ~ who offers us a friendship with him, and who has done something to break down the barriers we set up between him and us. I do believe that the church is part of the message too, though at times the church as an institution can be embarrassing! And so membership, and how baptism fits in to that, is actually a core point as well.

And another part of the picture is how we should live out what we believe, because Christian faith is not just comforting thoughts or hope for something nice in the future. And how do we "know" about all this? And what are we to make of the bible and how can we use it? Quite a lot to get your head round ~ and that is only touching the surface!

We believe that there is a God, one God, and that he created all that we see around us ~ though within that creation, from simplest to the most complex, there is a freedom to explore and develop. For us humans that means our own creativity and inquisitiveness about creation and, not least, the possibility of

relating with our Creator. In fact, without such a relationship there is something missing in what we are.

I cannot prove that in a strict, rationalistic way ~ but neither can I prove many things which are at the heart of our lives, like love, or beauty, or humour and the like. I recognise that scientists may argue that the odds against there being a God are something like umptillion to one (I forget how many noughts they put into umptillion, and I'm not sure how they worked it out anyway). But I also know that the same atheist scientists admit that the odds against human life are of the same kind (perhaps one nought less, but it's still enough noughts to fill a page). I think we all believe, with reason, in human life, don't we? In fact other scientists argue that the way the universe works makes it tend to create things like our planet, and biochemistry like ours. They give it the posh name of the "anthropic principle." That does not prove a God, but it is a pointer to some kind of intention within the universe! I'm prepared to take on those odds.

But what is this creator like? There are pointers to his exuberance and generosity, his love of order and awesome wonder, in the nature of creation itself. Having said that, however, I have to acknowledge the puzzle presented by the violence and destructiveness we see in creation. Within that apparent destructiveness, however, creative, even caring, forces are released. (But that is another story!) To know more about our Creator we need to rely on what he has shown us of himself more directly: deductions from his creation cannot be the full picture.

I'm going to jump directly to Jesus here; I know that begs many questions, but space is limited. In many ways in human history God has made his presence felt, through a sense of awe, or fairness, or love, or beauty, and in challenges to follow a course of action (to try God out, even) and accept where it led. Out of these kinds of experience there grew the Jewish faith, and out of that faith came an awareness of our human tendency to get things wrong, to break relationships and hurt and even oppress each other (to put it bluntly, we sin, breaking our relationships with God and with each other); but there also grew up an expectation that God would somehow intervene to set things right ~ not just with a better set of rules but in a personal and caring, forgiving and inspiring way.

Enter Jesus! Not quite what people expected, but someone who shared the rough and experienced the cruel side of life, as well as enjoying its pleasures. After an early life which involved being a refugee, and supporting a family whose main breadwinner had seemingly died early, he launched into preaching and teaching, praying and healing. He tried, for example, to reconcile brothers arguing over their father's estate; he brought men and women whose various illnesses made them outcasts back into the community; he challenged nationalists, whom we might call racist, to recognise the good in those they despised, and to look for conciliation ~ and he wept because they would not go down that road. He challenged an oppressive Governor to recognise true integrity. I could go on ~ its in the gospels, read all about it! He created a group of followers, the nucleus of a new community which would try to live out those ideals and would invite other people to do so too.

In his words he showed what God wants from us and considers important and valuable; in his life he showed us God's character in person; and more, in his actions, especially in the final act of his normal, earthly life, he did something to reconcile men and women to God. That ~ his death on the cross ~ achieved something which makes amends for the wrong which we do (to explain how is more than Concord article!) drawing to himself human hatred and releasing the forgiving energy of God. Perhaps the clearest, brief, way of highlighting this is to quote what he said about his executioners: "Forgive them, Father, for they do not know what they are doing." And a few days earlier he had pointedly said, "When I am lifted up" ~ on the cross, that is ~ "I will draw all people to myself." Even in that ~ or rather perhaps, especially through that ~ he was inviting men and women to link themselves to him, and accept the benefits which he was winning for them, as well as living out his way of life.

And so, here at least because these thoughts began with what someone thinking about baptism would need to know, I will jump directly to baptism. You see, it is a sign or symbol of just that, of linking ourselves to Jesus. Jesus talked about his death as a baptism (we use the phrase a baptism of fire, don't we). Earlier he had used his own baptism as a way of identifying himself with people who wanted to get their lives and relationship with God right. In turn, we use baptism as a tangible sign of identifying ourselves

with him and latching on to what he achieved for us. (We use tangible signs like this so often in our lives without thinking of them ~ like a handshake expressing welcome and good wishes; a hug expressing comfort and reassurance. Baptism is no different, though it is more unusual and I would say more demanding, more committing.)

But in full blown baptism, where you are dipped right into the water, you come out on the other side! You are lifted clear of the water. We are not only latching on to the benefits of Jesus' death ~ the forgiveness and new relationship with God which he offers ~ we are also looking forward to and praying for a new life. You see, we are tuning in to the effects of his resurrection as well, his return to a fuller life three days after his crucifixion. Space prevents me exploring that now (come to church at Easter, if not before ~ or perhaps I will write about it before then.) but for him death was not the end of the story. (You can't keep a good man down!) That new life is not just for him back then, or for the future, or for heaven. It is also about a new quality of life here and now for us ~ aware of God's love and support with us in our day to day lives; aware of God's moral energy (his Holy Spirit) helping us to get things right and to know what is right; aware of the support and fellowship of the Christian community as we express our gratitude to God.

St. Valentine's Day

Or at least the nearest Sunday to it ~ Feb. 13th.

A special invitation to join us at St. Wilfrid's at the 10.30am service, particularly if you were married here, or are planning to do so. The service will focus on love and marriage, and will probably use some of the music which is traditionally associated with marriage, as well as readings and prayers which are appropriate to the theme. I hope to send out written invitations to those married recently or who have booked a wedding, but if you are just thinking about it, or got married elsewhere so that I do not have your details, do feel able to come along.

Archbishops in Town! At the end of February the two Archbishops, will be in Manchester, marking a milestone in our own bishop's career. See CruX for details.

“Out of Africa” On Fri.4th Mar. David Drackley will be putting on a music and picture presentation in aid of his orchestra in St.Wilfrid’s Church Hall, Ford Lane (M22 4WE). 7.00–10.00pm. Admission £5.00.