

CONCORD ~ February 2015

Prayer for the Month,

Almighty God, who have taught us
that love is the fulfilment of your law;
inspire and strengthen in us
such a love towards each other in families, and communities,
and towards you, our God and father,
that we honour you through our actions and attitudes.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane.

0161 **998 2615**

Dear Friends,

Last month I commented that there was an election on the horizon, but that I would not comment further. I am going to go back on that, not to comment in detail, but to note that in the proposed TV debates the Green Party is still being excluded (as of 15th Feb.) Now politicians from *all* the other main national parties are using this omission to score points, which may not do any of them much good, as we get disgusted with such manoeuvres or bored by them.

But it is, seriously, a grave omission ~ not just because it discounts the evidence of opinion polls, and recent voting patterns, and of a nationwide on-line petition, but because this sidelines such an important global issue for the next decade and more. Immediately, there is a crucial conference in Paris on the issue of Climate Change at the end of the year, at which the next government will have to be represented and will need to make a constructive contribution. In the longer term climate change is, as I suggested last month, the major secular issue for our time. It needs to be on the agenda in May, and beyond. It should not be sidelined while the more conventional battlefields of economy or NHS or even Europe are fought over. I am not convinced that the Green Party has the right ideas on those and other wider issues, but their unique selling point ~ the environment ~ should be brought into focus by their presence in this, the widest public debate. *All four* of the other national parties should be asking for their inclusion.

I am writing this in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo massacre, which is an appalling and deplorable event, but which invites comment from a religious and Christian perspective, as well as a humanitarian and liberal one. It was predictable that the cover of the next issue after the attack should depict Mohammed (and one is tempted to say that for once the respectful prayer after his name ~ *peace be upon him* ~ is appropriate) with the slogan *Je suis Charlie*. What is a fine touch is the tear on his cheek. It is surely actions such as this which bring dishonour to the prophet ~ not the act of drawing him ~ and we may well picture him weeping at what does him no true service at all. It is the freedom which we enjoy in Europe to say and print things which are satirical or critical which also enables his followers to worship freely and openly in France, unlike followers of other faiths in Saudi Arabia.

It seems that it is only relatively recently that such opposition to the depiction of Mohammed has come into Islam. There is an absolute ban on idolatry, with which I have a great deal of sympathy. In Christian history too there have been episodes of iconoclasm, and when I hear of statues of saints where the feet have been worn away by the incessant kisses of Christian worshippers, I am appalled and disgusted. But to ban idolatry is not to ban pictures, and I have copies of examples of early Islamic art in which Mohammed *is* portrayed.

If the tear on Mohammed's cheek is a nice touch, the slogan above him is the most profound. It is not so much that the pen is mightier than the sword, or even that the blood of martyrs is the seed that spreads their ideas; *tout est pardonné*. All is forgiven. A very hard response, and a very Christian one, from people, most of whom would not particularly claim a Christian faith. As a moral response to people who think that Mohammed somehow needs to be avenged it is gentle, wise, measured, and most appropriate. That slogan has not received the notice that it deserves as people have discussed the picture below it. Our prayers should be that all those enraged by the massacre should take that slogan to heart, and while taking precautions to protect themselves should not turn to supposed vengeance themselves, or use it as a political excuse.

14th February is St.Valentine's Day, of course. It is worth celebrating (and not just with a candle-lit dinner), so on

Sunday 15th there will be a special service in St. Wilfrid's for all who want to celebrate their love, and to think about marriage, either looking back or looking forward. Invitations should go out in early February ~ but see our diary page.

And now read on.

Greg Forster

Magpie

... has looked over the shoulder of some children as they wrote letters to God;

*Dear God, instead of letting people die,
and having to make new ones,
why don't you just keep the ones you got now? Jane*

*Dear God, in bible times did they really
talk that fancy? Jennifer*

*Dear God, please put a nother Holiday between
Christmas and Easter.*

There is nothing good in there now. Ginny

... Not only yellow jackets now, but higher walls and girders have appeared on the Camperlands site. Here's hoping.

... but the Green Dalek is a puzzle. The scaffolding is down, and we can get a better idea of what it looks like. It is certainly far less oppressive from the back, now that it is more or less as originally designed. But is it being fitted out? And what about the odd bit of Herras fencing wedged into the gap next to 11 Church Rd.? And where the rubbish bin facing across to the war memorial was fired, Magpie noticed that it took several months for any patching or repairs to take place. Above that the burned fascia is only just being repaired and the glass is still smokey, while broken windows still reveal tatty insulation fibre.

... for the record, crocuses were seen, in flower, in the churchyard on 9th January. Is it a record? That day, after the gales, a temperature of 15° was briefly recorded in the village, and the sun wasn't even shining!

... is impressed by the Metrolink services in Wythen-shawe, opened earlier than planned, even though they by-pass Northenden. He is puzzled, however, by the notice which appears at many cross-roads where the track crosses. "Cyclists, take care when crossing the track." Whoever wrote that was probably not a cyclist. It is not *crossing* a tram track that poses

problems for cyclists, since it is difficult to trap a wheel if you are going at right angles to the tram-slot. No, it is as you run *parallel* to the tram-track that danger arises (and Magpie has talked with at least one person who has got a wheel caught and so come off through lack of awareness in *that* situation). Worst of all is where chicanes or parked vehicles push the cyclist out over the tracks.

Get ready for a belly laugh! Do an internet search for Northenden Civic Society and you will come up with two sites. One is fairly simple and is running normally. The other actually lapsed a year or so ago, and the address has been hijacked ~ by a Japanese group, it seems, which may or may not be serious. The page is covered in Japanese script, and an NCS member who put it through an internet translation service tells Magpie that it advertises a cure for constipation. Did they do consumer research? Do they know something we do not? Is Northenden seething with constipated Japanese? Is there some clandestine tourist trade? Is it something about our water? Are we a spa?

Magpie recently looked into the council's consultation questionnaire about its proposed cuts. He is bemused that two whole pages (11 questions) are devoted to asking whether the respondent is male, female, or does not know, and such things, while only a page and a half (7 questions, one repeated in the 11) deal with the council's proposals. And even one of these is rather like asking whether we agree with motherhood and apple pie, since it refers to a bland bit of sloganeering earlier on. What does this tell us about the council's priorities? Is this time for another belly laugh, or tears of despair? There was very little on the document about what actually might happen ~ we were referred to the council website, and this was in the paper version intended for people without web access.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

South Manchester Meeting

**There is a meeting for worship at 10.30am every Sunday.
at the Friends' Meeting House, Wythenshawe Rd.,**

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

Read Mark 2 ...

G. S. F.

As I noted last month, in the Church of England scheme of readings this year we are focusing on St. Mark's Gospel, so I tried briefly to introduce it. I ended rather abruptly with the suggestion that while many scholars think it was written in the 60s or even 70s AD, there are reasons for me to think it was earlier ~ in the 40s. I was taken to task for not explaining more.

So here goes. In a modern book, if you want to know when it was published you can usually look inside the front cover, and it will say so. Ancient writers were not so obliging; we have to look for other evidence, such as events or people that are mentioned, quotations in other datable documents, or possibly comments by later writers. But does it matter? In the case of a Gospel, the closer it is to the actual events in time, the closer it will probably be, all else being equal, in accuracy.

Now clearly Mark's Gospel was written after Christ's death and resurrection ~ but that is hardly in doubt. Are there any other events referred to in the Gospel which can be dated. Most scholars focus on chap. 13, which appears to foretell the end of the world, or at least something cataclysmic. Some say that it betrays a knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, so must have been written after then. (They presume that Jesus could not foresee such an event, unlike Winston Churchill with WW2) Others, with greater truth, say that it does not show *detailed* knowledge of that event, so must be written before then. But that gives us a pretty wide range ~ 30-70AD. Can it be narrowed further? One scholar, J.G. Crossley, has suggested that the way Mark talks about incidents and sayings of Jesus, which relate to disputes in the early church to do with the observance of Jewish law, points to a date before Paul's letters – i.e. before the early 50s AD. This is very subtle, and presumes these disputes were contested everywhere ~ but still, it is a straw in the wind.

I prefer two different approaches. Firstly, Mark is copied (and so endorsed!) by Matthew and Luke. Because of a throw-away line in 2 Corinthians ch.8 v18 we know that someone (I suspect Luke) was "famous for the Gospel" in about 56AD. Thus Mark must be a number of years before then. And secondly, in his chap.13, Mark as editor comments that *the reader should understand* a reference by Jesus to an obscenity

being placed in the temple. (I over-simplify). Mark's aside best fits with what the mad Roman emperor Gaius tried in 40AD when he sent a statue of himself to go there. It was vivid in Mark's first readers' minds when he wrote ~ but by the time Luke writes up the story the relevance has passed, and he generalises it. So I would argue that Mark is written soon after Gaius' abortive venture, in the early to mid-40s AD. Also a rather subtle straw in the wind, but that is the best you will get, I'm afraid.

If I am right, that means these stories of the life and work of Jesus were put on paper well within the lifetime of many eyewitnesses to them. They are set down with a distinct slant ~ to show where the Christian good news starts from ~ but are none the less true to that purpose and true to the events.

Northenden Theatre Club has performances on
Febr. 1st – 7th. in the Methodist Church Hall, Victoria Rd.

The Rector's booklet, ***The Wise Man's Servant***, (*The Magician's Servant*) which should have been out for Christmas, or at least for Epiphany, is now, at last, available (at £1.50) in St. Wilfrid's church.

It is written for grown ups, though clever children might like it too. It tries to set the journey of the Wise Men in its setting.

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.

Drop in on St. Wilfrid's ...
On Sundays from 2.30 till dusk/5pm the church is open for private prayer, for enquiries, or just to look around.
To visit at other times, please contact the Rector.

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](http://www.stwilfridsnorthenden.org.uk)
And follow us ~ like us, befriend us even ~ on Facebook –
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.

Sunday Scramblers ~ for 3½ to age 9 upwards ~ meet, for the moment, in the Church Hall unless there is a Family Service, between 10.30 and 11.30am on Sundays

Feb. 1st 10.30am Family Communion & Parade
6.30pm United Evening Worship at St.Wilfrid's

8th 10.30am Holy Communion
6.30pm Evening Worship.

St.Valentine's Sunday ~ Feb 15th, book the date.

10.30am Holy Communion & Celebration Service.
6.30pm Evening Worship

Weds. 18th **Ash Wednesday evening Communion, 7.30pm**

22nd 10.30am Morning Prayer
6.30pm Holy Communion

Mar. 1st 10.30am Family Communion & Parade Service
6.30pm United Service @ Northenden Methodists

8th 10.30am Holy Communion
6.30pm Evening Worship

Mothering Sunday Family Service, 10.30am, 15th March.

Churchyard ... if you brought wreaths into the churchyard for relatives at Christmas we should be grateful if they were removed before they deteriorate. They should normally be removed by the end of the Christmas season ~ 2nd Febr.

Dates for your Diary ~ it's all happening!



Women's Group ~

Next meeting on February 2nd, 7.45pm: in the Rectory;
Janet Hiles is talking about *Mercy Ships*, with illustrations.

Wed. 11th Feb. Deanery Synod at St.Luke's, 7.30pm.

Note the **St.Valentine's** day service on Sun 15th Feb., 10.30am, and the **Ash Wednesday** service at 7.30pm, in church.

Thur. 19th Feb., 7.30pm, Hall **P.C.C.** meeting.

Wed. 25th 8.00pm Rectory. Bible Study and discussion (Lent)

Sat. 28th 10.00 – 11.30am Hall, COFFEE MORNING

Mon. 2nd **March Women's Group** 7.45 for 8.00pm Rectory
Joan Mycock will talk about a visit to N. India and Nepal.

Wed. 4th (and 11th, 18th ...) Lent group in Rectory, 8.00pm

Note the Mothering Sunday celebrations on 15th, in church 10.30

School Governors meet on Tuesday 17th in the school, 4.00pm.

Registers ...



Baptised, on Sun. 21st Dec. 2014

Vicky Mather, Betsy Ruby Smith,

Winston James Ado-Kofie, Winielle Selasi Ado-Kofie

In Memoriam.

Eric Mee (Brett St.) 81, Kenneth Steele (Bucklow Dr.),

Alan Goodwin (Brooklands) 77, Alan Hodgert (Lovett Walk) 93.

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

*If the first Sunday clashes with a school holiday, check with Amy to see
if different arrangements have been made.*

Feb. 1st 9.30am MESSY CHURCH

11.00am The Rev. T. Nicholls, Holy Communion.
6.30pm United Service **at St. Wilfrid's**

8th 11.00am Mr. Bob Bartindale.

15th 11.00am Mrs Sarah Hooks

22nd 11.00am Mrs. Kathryn Price
6.30pm United Service @ Cheadle Hulme Meth. Ch.

Mar. 1st 9.30am MESSY CHURCH
11.00am To be announced.
6.30pm United Service **at Northenden Meth. Ch.**

8th 11.00am To be announced
(preachers' schedule not yet available)

Community Lunches

Wed. Febr. 11th 12.00 noon – 1.30pm
Next lunch. 11th Mar. (To be confirmed)

This year sees the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. I don't know yet if there are any national plans for marking that event, but I am considering whether to produce a booklet about WW2 casualties commemorated in our churchyard, similar to the one about WW1 victims. There are a number buried here, or recorded on gravestones. I should be interested to hear any stories that might go in such a booklet. *G.S.Forster*

I believe ... 1. "I believe" G.S.F.

Sunday by Sunday in church we repeat the Creed as part of our worship, affirming our belief in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in forgiveness, the Christian community, and the hope of eternal life. I think it is worth looking at the creed, over the next few months, and unpacking it, so that it is not just a mantra we recite, but something we understand (a bit, at any rate) and I hope live by.

It starts with the simple words, "I believe." They are important. Christian faith is a personal commitment, not just a vague cultural thing that we grow up with. Some of us have grown up with it, and others have come to it or come back to it as our lives have developed, but it is something to opt into and commit ourselves to. That is true whether it comes like a sudden flash of light or a gradual dawning of involvement.

And the word *believe* is to be taken strongly. We sometimes say things like, "I believe it might rain today," in a vague, non-committal way. That is little more than saying, "I think it might rain, I have a hunch." But that is not what is intended when we say "I believe" in the creed. No, it is a strong affirmation: "I accept these statements as true, and I am going to let them shape the way I live." It is more like the person who is trekking in rough country, who comes across a rope suspension bridge over a ravine, who checks out the anchorages and the ropes and says "I believe this will hold me" before actually stepping across. But it is more than that too; the statements are about a person, so the "*I believe*" of the creed is almost like the "*I will*" of a marriage service.

So we are both saying that we accept the creed as a fair summary of what we know about God, and also that we are committed to a relationship with him.

Creeks grew out of what Christians affirmed when they were baptised. The creed we use in a Communion service was put together and ratified in a number of church councils in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, as bishops and others tried to put into words what they experienced and found taught in the bible. But they based what they said on the simpler creeds which they had learned and grown up with, and used at their own baptisms. Those statements grew from a desire to be true to what God had revealed in the bible and early christian experience, but they also grew out of many years of commitment in the face of hostility from Roman or other authority. Thus to say, "I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ ..." is not just saying that Jesus is the one who shows us God's will and nature in person. It is saying, at some risk, that it is he, not the Roman emperor, who is Lord.

And that is not just a historical quirk. We should be saying that the values of the kingdom of God will shape the values by which we live here and now. So faith, belief, is a practical commitment, not just a mental assent to some ideas.

I hope to look further into the beliefs we affirm ~ the loving nature of the Person we affirm, and the reasons why it is reasonable to affirm him ~ in subsequent issues of Concord, but there is one further thing I want to suggest. In fact I think I suggested it in one of the first sermons I preached here in

Northenden, though the practicalities have not always been there. When we say, or indeed sing, "I believe ..." in the creed it should be rather like a fanfare. It is an act of worship and praise as much as doctrinal statement; so as you say it, imagine the trumpets blasting out jubilantly behind you; imagine the bells sounding out a triumphant peal above you; if you can, almost shout the words in capital letters. Here I stand, this is what makes me; I BELIEVE IN GOD ...

Assisted Dying?

G.S.F.

Further discussion in the House of Lords and the well publicised death of a campaigner on the subject have brought this issue back into the limelight. It is emotive and difficult to speak or write about in an objective way, though I want to try. But having said that I recognise that it is, rightly, an emotive issue, affecting individuals and their families deeply. A peeress can speak of how in the depths of illness she could have sought this way out, but having worked through her depressed state is now glad to be alive, despite her disabilities: a woman can campaign to protect her husband and family from prosecution if they help her avoid the indignities and pains of a progressive illness. We can feel for both of them. But even so I do not think this is an issue that is to be decided just on the balance of our emotions and on emotive individual stories. There are wider principles and concerns at stake, for the community as a whole.

While the indignities and pains of severe illness and approaching death have always been with us, they are more prominent, I suspect, now for two reasons. One is the advance in medical technology, which means that someone who would in former years have died can now be kept alive, pneumonia can be warded off with drugs, and so on. If this means more years of rewarding life and relationships, splendid, but it can mean long drawn out indignity. Coupled with this is the advance of the compensation lawyer, who will suggest that if your loved one has not been given heroic medical treatment, you have a claim for negligence. Doctors can be understandably wary. Nonetheless the old adage should still apply; *thou shalt not kill, but neither strive / officiously to keep alive*. In the background, as part of the answer to the problem, is the hospice movement ~ offering dignified care and human support as death approaches.

I suppose it is natural to fear pain, and wish to avoid indignity as some progressive illness takes its toll. Hospices offer some remedy for this, but the fear is still there, so one can understand why a lively, independent person may look forward and ask to be allowed a way out, with medical help. But there is the danger if this is on the statute book that those who are frail and vulnerable will fear what the medics, with their family's support, might do to them. We are not isolated islands, but part of a continent, so that the manner of any man's death affects others in community. So is it right to hurt the fearful and vulnerable so that the strong and independent can have their way? It is sometimes right morally, in an interconnected community, to forego one good so that another good can remain. This issue is one that should be discussed not just as a matter of individuals' rights to do what they want with their own lives, but also of our responsibilities, even at the end of our lives, towards the wider community.

And finally, in connection at least with the bill now in the Lords, there is a logical and practical catch. People asking for assistance in dying are expected to be capable of a rational decision and to be mentally competent. They are also to be expected to have less than six months to live. For many people the situation that they wish to avoid is prolonged dementia. With this and with many other illnesses a six month diagnosis is impossible. So *this* bill defeats its own purpose.