

CONCORD ~ January 2013

Prayer for the Month

As we step forward, Lord, from the old year to the new,
travel with us and go before us to show us the way;

As we move from the known into the unknown, forgive us
what lies behind, and guide us rightly into what is before us;

As we live in a world which can be rough, keep us loving
though our lives may be tough;

As we encounter things familiar and strange, fill us with the
wonder of your love to us, through friends and families and the
glories of your world around us.

Through Jesus Christ our friend and brother, Amen.

A prayer for the new year, with echoes of Sydney Carter.

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane.

0161 998 2615

Dear Friends,

Firstly, a note of thanks to everyone involved in the
production and distribution of Concord. That is much appreciated.
So too is the involvement of our advertisers, and we thank them
too for their support.

And also a personal note of thanks for the various gifts
and cards which Sue and I have received over Christmas. Thank
you all.

Best wishes too for the new year. No doubt the pundits
and politicians will tell us how hard it will be, but we do not
necessarily have to believe them, do we? Approach it with this
frame of mind: to be grateful for the blessings and opportunities
which we receive; to enjoy what is rich and good and beautiful; to
look to God for the strength, patience and wisdom to deal with
life's difficulties; to support family, friends, and neighbours and to
recognise and appreciate the support we receive from them. Look
at your proverbial cup which is at least half full, rather than
grumbling because it seems almost half empty. And so God give
you a happy and prosperous new year.

What that year will hold we can only partly tell. Almost
certainly the Church will find a way to revisit the issue of women
as bishops ~ about that more later. Perhaps the economy will
grow a little, which would be nice but, as I have written before,

also a little worrying given that the resources of the planet on which we live are finite. Where I believe growth should come is in industries which reuse existing materials, or develop resources and technologies which are renewable. This is not just about saving energy or generating electricity or other forms of power; it is about reusing materials to make what we need or want. It is also about developing a politics which measures success not in terms of having more but in terms of using less; developing an economics which puts at the top of its wish list not a greater domestic product but a smaller footprint of consumption.

Another issue which is already coming up, and over which the church will no doubt be berated, is the attempt to re-define marriage to include gay relationships. There are two, perhaps three issues being confused here. The end result is rather like describing a circle as a square with rounded corners. It needs some very special pleading to argue that!** The issues are firstly about legal protection and recognition of a couple's interest in each other should things go wrong, or when one dies. That is available in the form of a civil partnership, and with that practical legal protection I am very content. Many people loosely call that formal relationship "marriage" already.

The second issue is whether such a relationship should be ratified in church, with the normal trappings. And thirdly, is it right to call this "marriage"? I believe not. The essential nature of marriage includes not only legal protections but the fact that it is a relationship between a man and a woman, with the possibility at least that they will themselves have children of their own. This is not just a legal definition which Parliament can alter at will with a vote. But no doubt more of this as the year goes on.

In early December data from the 2011 Census came out indicating a significant drop in the percentage of people claiming to be Christians, and an increase in those asserting no religious faith, compared with 2001. Perhaps what it actually shows is that more people recognise themselves for what they have been for a while, since Christianity is not just a matter of living in the UK and not being anything else: it is a positive commitment to Jesus as the one who reveals God most fully and has done some-thing to bring us to God. These particular statistics are sad but no surprise.

But Happy New Year anyway!

Greg Forster

** Unless you are a mathematician trying to calculate *Pi*.

Northenden Methodist Church

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

Sunday Services.

1st Sunday every month

Family worship ~ Sunday breakfast club ~ MESSY CHURCH

All start off with breakfast** together at 9.00am, then do activities with your child(ren) followed by a story, songs, and prayer based on the activities ~ finishes about 10.30am.

**Currently £1.50p per person.

For details contact Amy Carline, 07816 888 704

Jan. 6th 2013 9.00am Messy Church

11.00am Mr. Ron Caseley

6.30pm United Service @ Northenden **Methodist Church**

13th 11.00am Covenant Service ~ the Rev. David Bown.

20th 11.00am Mr. David James.

27th 11.00am Mrs. Olivia Tu'ihalāmaka

Feb. 3rd 9.00am Messy Church

11.00am The Rev. David Sanders ~ Holy Communion

6.30pm United Service at St. Wilfrid's

10th 11.00am Mr. John Harrington

Community Lunch

Wed., ~ 9th January, 12 noon till 1.30pm

(Next lunch, Wed. Feb. 13th ~ 12 noon till 1.30pm)

Greater Manchester Police.

On Wednesdays from 9th January onwards between 11.00am and noon a representative of the Police will be available at Parkway Green House, 460 Palatine Rd., opposite the Medical Centre, to

discuss any issues or concerns you may have. For more information, contact Wythenshawe Police Station on 856 4882.

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

Northenden Civic Society

Northenden Civic Society **website** is now open - you can find it on < [www . northendencivicsociety . org](http://www.northendencivicsociety.org) >. Our Civic Society *Facebook* is also open: www.facebook.com/NorthendenCivicSociety You can also find a *Facebook* link from the website. And for a more personal encounter with the society, there is a meeting every second Tuesday in a month, in St.Wilfrid's Church Hall, at 7.30pm.

The society lodged its application to establish a Neighbourhood Forum for Northenden in mid-November. It should be processed within six weeks, according to the regulations, but perhaps, with Christmas in that period, there may be a slight slippage. It is the first application in the City, so that may attract more attention, and take a little more time, than when it becomes a more routine thing. A meeting is planned with council officers in late January at which we will be taking this further forward. We gather that Northen Moor and Brooklands is also interested in establishing a Forum, and possibly Didsbury too.

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 also, at 10am, there is 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, both between 10.30 and 11.30am Sundays except
when there is a Family Service in church (Jan.6th, Feb. 3rd. &c.)

The Nigerian Anglican "Restoration" Congregation now
meets weekly at **12.30pm** for about 2 hours in St.Wilfrid's Church.

The service includes traditional and modern music.

- Jan. 6th **2013** 10.30am Family Communion
6.30pm United Evening Service @ **Methodist Church**
- 13th 10.30am Holy Communion
6.30pm Evening Worship
- 20th 10.30am Holy Communion
6.30pm Evening Worship
- 27th 10.30am Morning Prayer
6.30pm Holy Communion
- Feb. 3rd 10.30am Family Communion & Parade
6.30pm United Evening Service, @ **St.Wilfrid's**
- 10th 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.

The Parish Registers -

In Memoriam ...



Frank Egan (St. Anthony's), Jean Copeland (Sharston) 71
Ronald Brewer (Homewood Rd.) 82.

Baptisms;

... on Sunday 2nd December ...

Zainab Ruth Okpomosi Ezimokhai,
Mia Patricia Megan Jones

... and received into the Anglican Church ...
Anuli Amanda Udeze.

Dates for your Diary ~ it's all

happening!



There is no Women's group in January ~
next meeting February 4th.

Weds. 16th, 23rd, 30th Jan. Bible Studies 8.00pm, Rectory.

Thur. 24th 7.00 for 7.30pm Deanery Synod Meeting **
at St. Chad's, Ladybarn, with Philip Blinkhorn,

Chairman of the Diocesan Board of Finance. Open to visitors.

Sat. 26th 10.00 - 11.30am Coffee Morning, Church Hall.

Thur. 31st. 7.30pm Church Hall PCC meeting.

*Note this date, which is a change from the provisional date
put forward at the last meeting.*

NB, Sat. 2nd Feb. Farmers' Market in the Village.

Mon. 4th Women's Group in the Rectory, 7.45 for 8.00pm.

Wed. 6th Feb. Bible Study, 8.00pm in the Rectory.

Note the meeting of Northenden Civic Soc. on 12th at 7.30pm

Wed. 13th is **Ash Wednesday**. Service in Church at **7.30pm**

**** Deanery Synod.**

The speaker at the Deanery Synod (the meeting of the
representatives of all the parishes in South Manchester) in January
will be Philip Blinkhorn, the chairman of the diocesan board of

finance. He will be talking about the finances of the diocese. This (and any) synod meeting is open for other church members to attend, and though it sounds a heavy subject, Philip is a lively speaker and this is a topic which should be of concern to us all ~ not just to synod members. After al, a fair slice of the parish income is paid to the diocese to meet clergy salaries and other services for which the diocese is responsible.

The Church Hall.

During the autumn the small room of the church hall was insulated and reglazed, with a view to improving its warmth. This appears to be successful, except when doors get left open. There is still some patching and redecorating that needs finishing, but many people have commented on how much warmer it is.

This was in part an experiment. If it works (as it seems to have done) we are going to try to find funds to do a similar job in the main hall. But that is for next financial year. **GSF**

Women Bishops ~ that vote! *Greg Forster*

Following the vote in General Synod in late November the Archbishop of Canterbury commented that the church had a lot of explaining to do. For some that was very basic explaining indeed: Q. ~ who or what are laity, for instance? (A ~ the ordinary "lay" people, non-ordained church members: it is rather like *commons* as in House of Commons ~ who are not lords or royalty.)

For many others, it was the voting system that floored them. How could such an obvious majority in favour of ordaining women as bishops become a defeat? That ought not to be a puzzle, really. Our own British constitution, and the American one, work in the same way. For a Bill to become an Act of Parliament with the force of law it needs to be approved in the lower and the upper house, and then to be signed off by Queen or President: three houses, all giving their assent. Usually deals and discussions before the vote mean that a bill is rarely defeated, though our House of Lords did defeat parts of a Government bill the day after the church vote and eyelids were only gently batted, eyebrows gently raised.

Nor should the idea of a two thirds majority be so surprising. The Americans, I believe, require it for any amendment to their constitution, as do many other institutions: of a hypothetical Northenden Lacrosse Club wished to close itself and sell its land to

a developer its rule-book would almost certainly require two thirds of the members to vote for the change, not just 50%+1. No, though it produced a result that was unexpected and by many not wanted, this process itself was not particularly bizarre or arcane.

So what about the issue itself? Why should the Church of England, whose supreme governor is a woman, not include women within its most senior management structure? Put like that it is a strange situation, but should it be put like that? Is the church the same as any other major corporation or institution in our society?

I am writing like that slightly tongue in cheek, since I would see the church as a different kind of organisation, but for many of our neighbours that *is* the comparison they make. But our roots lie in the ministry of Jesus, not in English company law, and we are part of the worldwide people of God, not some human organisation. So we look to what He has instituted, not some Human Rights Act, to shape our structures.

And there's the rub! What was it he did institute? Is the fact that no woman was counted in his twelve apostles (whose successors the bishops allegedly are) determinative? Or is the key fact that he incorporated women among his followers in a far more open way than any of his contemporaries and chose to be seen first by women after his resurrection. Indeed, he commissioned them to be the first emissaries (apostles) in passing on that good news? Or what about St. Paul's teaching for his churches? In one place he says that women should keep silent in church, and should not "have authority" but a few pages on he asserts that in Christ there is no male or female, slave or free, but all are one ~ equal.

Part of the answer to these apparent contradictions lies in the cultural setting ~ not just the cultural setting of the first century communities of Palestine or the Roman Empire, but also our own recent history. Our own first: because of the way women have been regarded in European society in the past few centuries we have been ready to read the New Testament in a particular way, and indeed have justified that attitude from it. Therefore we quote it with approval or dismiss it as outdated, according to taste, without looking a bit deeper. But we cannot just say "the bible says." We have to ask, "Why did it say that, and where was it coming from?"

And where it was coming from in the first century was also a situation in which women were treated generally as second class

citizens (probably not "citizens" at all, in fact.) Thus for Jesus to give serious consideration to women was significant and counter-cultural. (See, for example, Luke 8 vv 1 – 3, or 10 vv 38-42, or John 20 vv 10-18). It is the beginning of what people call a trajectory, a direction of travel, which leads St. Paul to affirm "There is neither ... male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3 v28). He also speaks (Romans 16 v7) of a Junia who is described as "of note among the apostles." (and if your translation gives the male name Junias, or describes her and another person as "*men* of note", that just proves my point a paragraph ago about our 19th century assumptions which have crept into the translation. "Men" does not come in the original Greek text, as the old King James' Version recognises.)

So what about the limitations Paul does seem to place on women? In I Corinthians ch. 11 there is a long and to us rather convoluted discussion about whether a woman should be veiled when speaking in church (which incidentally includes a beautiful expression of the equality and interdependence of the sexes). The key points to note are *a*) that the details are matters of cultural decency; to wear a headscarf of some sort was a sign of respectability, but in Corinth to leave your hair loose was the sign of a loose woman. For the churches to disregard these social niceties in the name of Christian freedom would create a bad reputation for a new and fragile community. And *b*) note that women *were* actively involved in public worship, praying and prophesying openly and out loud.

But now the difficult bit: in ch. 14 vv34,35 of the same letter Paul says that women are not permitted to talk in church. Your translation here may say "speak" which sounds rather more formal. Either (this is the difficulty) he is contradicting his own teaching of three chapters earlier, or his intention was not what it seems at first reading. (Some people wonder whether Paul actually wrote this, and some manuscripts have it a couple of verses later, as if it is a marginal comment that has crept in ~ but that would be a rather cheap get-out.) Perhaps the answer is in verse 35. Remember, we are talking about a culture in which women did not get any proper education, and had been excluded from active participation in worship prior to the coming of Christian freedoms. There will be things in the worship and teaching that they do not grasp; they are to ask their menfolk about it at home, Paul says,

rather than disturbing the meeting. What he does not want (scholars suggest) is whispered conversations in the back row (or the front) asking what on earth (or in heaven's name) the preacher is on about!

And what appears the most damning verse of all, in I Timothy ch.2 vv11-15 and written to Timothy in Ephesus, ... The usual translation is something like, "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent." But is that what Paul meant, in a setting where women were either left uneducated and kept in a kind of purdah or conversely might exercise authority as priestesses in the fertility cult of Diana in Ephesus? Better scholars than I have suggested a different slant: "*(don't get me wrong)* It is not that I am instructing a woman to teach, still less to lord it over a man, but to be left in peace *(to listen and learn as a full part of the church.)*" In an admittedly difficult passage, it is not so much that Paul is forbidding women to act as leaders but rather that he is reassuring people who carry in their minds the image of pagan priestesses and mistakenly fear that that is what he is encouraging. He may not be saying (in our context) that women should be bishops, but neither is he saying they should not: only, in that context, that they should not be hassled.

So should women be bishops? Perhaps that is the wrong question. Rather, we should ask "what is a bishop?" For some people he is an essential part of the make-up of the church, and the church is not quite a proper church without him. I hope I am not caricaturing this view because I find it rather difficult to explain, or to get inside. Through his institution of the twelve (male) apostles Jesus established a church which centres around a ministry of bishops (their successors), and to a lesser extent of priests and deacons. Without their role it is not the true church. If their integrity is compromised the church's role in bringing people to God is also compromised. And also, if the church of England lets itself be compromised in this way, it creates barriers for itself with the wider catholic church.

But is this exalted view of the episcopate true to the earliest picture we have of the church? Is it true to Jesus own teaching? I think not. In Matthew's gospel ch. 23 vv1 – 12 we read of Jesus playing down any love of hierarchy and finery. In a slightly different context in Mark ch. 10 v43,44 he tells his followers to be servants, not dominators ~ and he meant that as a practical

instruction, not as a matter of rhetoric in which the boss claims to be everyone's servant. Similarly, in his letter to the Philippians Paul addresses it to the whole church ~ the saints ~ and then as an afterthought greets the bishops and deacons too. The letter to the Hebrews takes this even further; the word from which "bishop" comes is only used once, to address the whole community and tell them all to look after each other, while the leaders that there are are described by a verb, not a title. So yes, there should be leaders, but it is not them who make the church. There is nothing, I believe, in their essence or the essence of the church which prevents such leaders being women.

So what of the future? As I write there is news coming out that a new scheme will be brought forward for the July sessions of the General Synod. I do not know what that scheme will entail, not least because it has not yet been worked out. Two prayers come to mind: one is for the ministry of the whole church; that all Christians in their various vocations and ministries may serve God faithfully and fully. The other is for the unity of the church; that God may grant us the unity that is his will. Amen to all that.

Church Road Chippy

78 Church Rd., Northenden

Fish, chips, peas, sausages, pies, ...



Best quality food

tel. 0161 998-4630

Magpie ...

... as readers well know, Magpie often ponders deep philosophical questions, and is now puzzled by a new one. Have you noticed how often nowadays times are given as 12pm. When is 12pm? *P.m.* stands for *post meridiem*, "after mid-day", "after noon". But if noon is by definition 12.00hrs, how can a time be after itself? Do they mean 12 hours later than the noon hour ~ 24.00hrs? Or would they call that 12am? In the good old days (ah! those were the days!) it was 12 noon, or 12 midnight. Should we go back in time?

... another deep question is whether it is possible to park a car in a space shorter than the car is. Think about it.

... flew along Palatine Rd. in time to see the opening of the new Morrison's store on 26th November. The police had beaten him to it ~ what a shame they had to! That was because some other people had beaten them to it ~ burglars, who cut the phone and alarm lines and then stole the stock of cigarettes. This is a serious crime. It carries the death penalty, you see, for those who receive the stolen goods, if not the perpetrators themselves; a sentence of five minutes off your life for every item smoked, and the potential for a lingering incarceration due to bronchitis, emphysema, chronic heart disease or carcinoma.

... but on that cheerful note, *Magpie* wishes the store well. On the day it was crowded, and even the parking it has was being tested to the limit as more customers vied with delivery trucks.

... oh, and that thing about parking cars. If you were thinking it was to do with putting a Smart Car in end on, good try, but that isn't the answer.

... what a year 2012 was! Our Government and water companies discovered the power of sympathetic (or is it *anti*-pathetic) magic, when they issued a drought warning for much of England last spring, and spirited up nearly the wettest year on record. What should they warn us of this year?

... has been reading some more public notices:

- Elephants Please stay in your car.
 - Toilet out of order. Please use the floor below. (!)
- And in a Laundromat ...*
- Automatic washing machines ~ please remove all your clothes when the light goes out. (!!!!)

... has looked on Manchester Local Authority's website for details of the planning application for no. 1 Church Rd., ~ that tower block. As of 10th December (now 7th Jan.!) nothing has been posted. Does this mean that nothing has been submitted (in which case the Council may act on their threat to order its demolition) or does it just mean that it takes a week or so for an application to be posted. (It was due in by 30th Nov.)

... and that thing about parking cars. Some have quite low leading edges to their bonnets, and others have number plates

rebated under the light on their hatch-back. Magpie recently watched as a lady he knows expertly slotted her car between two others, not quite touching either, but overlapping the one behind. So the answer to the riddle is yes! Who says women can't park?