

2 0 ~ J u l y ~ 0 8

Prayer for the Month.

Heavenly Father, you have called your church to continue Christ's own work of reconciliation and to reveal your love to the world; forgive us for the sins which tear us apart; give us the courage to overcome our fears and to follow your truth as we seek that unity which is your gift and your will;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Based on the Common Worship prayer for Christian unity.

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane. 0161 998 – 2615

Dear Friends,

A great deal is being said at the moment about the price of food and fuel, so I might as well throw in my own three-ha'porth. The danger is that it will seem unfeeling towards people who are struggling to make ends meet, and I do not want to give that impression. I know it can be hard, and sometimes you have to decide not to get what you would like because it would put you into debt or mean you couldn't get what you need.

That said, I am not particularly sad that petrol costs have gone up so significantly. We are perhaps at last realising the cost as opposed to the price of oil. I have noticed in the past couple of months that on those occasions when I have had to go into Manchester during the rush

There is a cost as well as a price to oil.

hour or at the time of the school run, either by car or cycling, that the roads are less crowded than last year. I know too that on several occasions I have chosen not to make a pleasant but unnecessary car journey, or have cycled by preference. If the rising price of petrol makes us all think before we drive that can be no bad thing, because there is a cost, social and environmental, as well as a price to our use of oil. But, incidentally, I do think that it is now unnecessary for the Government to add an environmental hike to the tax on fuel. If it was really a covert way of raising revenue, then increased VAT will do that for them, and if it is truly for the environment, then market forces are doing it even more persuasively!

My second theme this month is to do with the church. You may have seen the reports in the press on the gay "wedding" of two clergymen in London in May. Technically it was a

"blessing", not a wedding, and neither was the civil partnership ceremony which preceded it, but in this, I suggest, technicalities are a smoke-screen. Likewise the suggestion that this was merely one friend doing his two friends a favour is simply disingenuous ~ or naïve.

My own views on gay relationships are too subtle to explain in the space that I have here. My views on people who use their love or other people's to score points in church (or any other) politics are strong: that is wrong, whatever is said about the relationship. Given the nearness of the Lambeth conference of Anglican leaders, and the known issues at that conference, I can only read this as provocation, intended to alienate morally conservative parts of the church still further. That is not love nor the respect for conscience which I believe must shape both sides of this debate. It is hurtful ~ and it would seem deliberately so. I commend the prayer at the head of this issue to you all.

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.

July 6 th	11.00am Morning Service
	6.30pm United Service @ Northenden
13 th	National Children's Home Sunday.
	11.00am Morning Service
20 th	11.00am Morning Service
27 th	11.00am Morning Service
Aug. 3 rd	11.00am Morning Service
	6.30pm United Service @ St.Wilfrid's

The Preachers' roster for July to September had not been worked out when Concord went to press ~ sorry.

COMMUNITY LUNCHESES ...

2nd and 4th Wednesdays in July ~ **9th & 23rd** 12 noon to 1.30pm

Fun Bingo: Sat. 26th July, noon to 2.00pm

BOAT LANE
COURT

VERY SHELTERED HOUSING

**BOAT LANE COURT,
BRETT ST., NORTHENDEN.**

RETIREMENT FLATS

ALL ENQUIRIES TO :

**THE MANAGER, BOAT LANE COURT, NORTHENDEN, M 22 4 EZ
TEL. 0161 945-7064 OR 07970 676785**

St. Wilfrid's Church,

Ford Lane. (Off Church Rd.)

Rector: Greg Forster (998-2615)

Organist: Arthur Mellor (928-0472)

[www . stwilfridsnorthenden . org . uk](http://www.stwilfridsnorthenden.org.uk)

Services:



Communion on Sundays at 8.00am,
and on Thursdays at 10.00am

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

July	6 th	10.30am	Family Service & Parade.
		6.30pm	United Service at Northenden Methodist Ch.
	13 th	10.30am	Holy Communion
		6.30pm	Evening worship
	20 th	10.30am	Holy Communion & Baptism
		6.30pm	Evening Worship
	27 th	10.30am	Morning Prayer
		6.30pm	Holy Communion
Aug.	3 rd	10.30am	Family Communion
		6.30pm	United Evening Worship

Drop in ... 2 – 5pm.

St. Wilfrid's church is open each Sunday from 2.00 – 5.00pm,
for prayer, visiting and just looking round, enquiries about
baptisms, weddings, ancestor hunting, ... &c.

IT'S ALL HAPPENING ... for your diaries

No bible study on Wed. 2nd July or Wed. 16th N.B.!!!

Mon. 7th July Women's Group barbecue. 7.00pm Rectory

Wed. 9th July Bible Study, Rectory, 8.00pm

Mon 14th School Governors, 6.00pm

Wed. 23rd July Bible Study. Rectory, 8.00pm

P.C.C to be arranged.

Sat. 26th July 10.00am ,, Coffee Morning. Church Hall.

And please note that we are expecting a team of visiting bell-ringers to visit the tower on Sat. 19th, from 3.00 – 5.00 pm.

Women's Group: July. Sue Forster
on July 7th we have our annual Barbecue at the Rectory
~ from 7.00pm

From the Registers ~

Baptised, on Sun.15th June ...

Sharon Harrison,

Megan Elizabeth and Lily Louise Percival,

Lucy-Jo Howarth, Alfie Jack Michael Whitby.

Married in the parish church on 21st June ...

Sharon Houghton to Andrew Jenkinson

In Memoriam

Vera Caveney,

May Clayton (Brett St.) 95, Dorothy Fern (Brett St.) 87.

Christian Aid Week ...

Thanks to everyone who worked for this, or gave! We have, I think, a record collection this year, of £2,315, for this work.

Many Thanks!

Wild Northenden ~ Bright and Beautiful ... G.S.F.

In March I threw out the idea of putting together a list of Northenden birds. Some more people have taken me up. Peter Helm reports a blackcap near Ford Cottage, and suggests that the swifts that go screeching through the village come from a colony in Sale ~ for them less than five minutes away. Maurice Lees has also given me a list, which includes the woodpeckers,

and he wonders why we do not seem to have the Jackdaws around this year. What I was delighted to notice, a day or so after the "bat walk" (another is billed, I think. Watch for posters) was a couple of pipistrelle bats flitting around the rectory garden.

Bricks and Mortar

Greg Forster

... or perhaps in our case, stones or slates and mortar. We hope to get clearance from the diocese in early July to proceed with the work on the lower aisle roofs and downspouts, but there is still the formal public notice to give, and other delays. Let's hope September is a dry month!

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 Lesley Thomson (491-1323)

The main hall and smaller rooms are available for hire;

~ contact Peter Todhunter (Meeting House Warden) 834-5797,

Celebrating Jubilee? ~

the debt crisis in this country and around the world.

Kevin Donnelly

So you think that slavery ended with Wilberforce? The Credit Crunch ~ a new kind of slavery or a new breakfast cereal?

Pardon the weak joke; after all, the current global financial crisis is not funny. Food prices are rising along with other demands on our pockets, both as families and as a nation. Crunch however is the word to describe the financial situation facing many people who feel themselves being painfully squeezed to the point of desperation. Does the Bible have anything useful to say about debt and money?

On April 28th 2008, the Guardian newspaper article, Which way from the edge of the abyss? imagined Gordon Brown calling Lambeth Palace for advice on "any good prayers for an economy on the edge of the abyss". There was no need to call Archbishop Rowan Williams, since modern versions of the Lord's Prayer talk

" Any good prayers for an economy on the edge?"

about forgiving debts rather than trespasses, which is the form most of us have known since childhood. But if debts is the correct word, where did the idea of forgiving debts come from?

Answer, in the book of Leviticus chapter 25, part of the Bible not often read even by people for whom regular Bible reading is a lifelong custom. My mother was one such, and I still have her bible, so I grew up among the Baptists and eventually became a regular reader, and then a lay preacher. Then came the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, so when it was my turn to lead worship at Altrincham Baptist Church, I looked up Lev.25, and was surprised to find that the Jubilee year in Ancient Israel was about debt cancellation, the release of debt-slaves and the return of mortgaged property to its original owners every 49 years.

I did not understand how such a system would work, and my Bible commentary was not much help. OT scholars seemed of the opinion that Jubilee was never practised and Jewish sources said nothing about contemporary celebration of Jubilee, but then came the Third World debt crisis in the 1980s and 90s. By this time I had a computer and was able to access more information about debt and its consequences.

I had bought Jim Wallis's "Call to Conversion" some ten years before and remembered a footnote in it about another book, "The Favorable Year of the Lord" by Robert B. Sloan. Sadly, it was out of print, and the original publishers were no longer in business. Then it occurred to me that someone in the internet news group uk.religion might shed some light. Immediately I got an email to say that there was a copy in Bristol University library, so courtesy of the inter-university lending service I was able to borrow it. When it arrived, a small paperback, truly, the scales fell from my eyes, for it opened up one of my favourite passages of scripture, the Nazareth sermon in Luke 4:16-30. The author clearly identified the sermon as Jesus' announcement of a Jubilee year.

Scales fell from
my eyes!

Prof. Sloan went further. He argued that debt cancellation is a repeated theme in the gospel of Luke, following Isaiah 61 which in turn reflects the Jubilee laws. Think of the Magnificat, John the Baptist, Zacchaeus, the Prodigal Son, the Lord's Prayer; all allude to the cancellation of unpayable debt as part of discipleship and being a follower of Jesus.

Periodic cancellation of debt did not begin with Leviticus, for it was an old Mesopotamian tradition that can be traced back to a thousand years before Moses. The American economic historian Michael Hudson has shown how that tradition shaped both Judaism and Christianity, having spent much of his professional career since 1980 exploring how faltering economies can be revived by enabling a fresh start to be made by cancelling debts. Prior to that his career included a return to university so that he could learn to read the cuneiform script of clay tablets. In fact

The only alternative to debt cancellation is to let things grind to a halt.

the only other alternative to debt cancellation is to let things grind to a halt which is now apparent in the US, the UK, and elsewhere.

Eventually, such debts cannot be paid, he suggests, and adds that modern bankers know this to be true.

I thought many Guardian readers would point out some of the Biblical evidence about debt cancellation, but not so.

Michael's father was one of the founders of what we would call the American Socialist Workers Party. Michael himself claims to be "not a religious man" but his grasp of the Bible and his economic scholarship are formidable. Oddly enough, Michael seems to me to have some difficulty in getting Christian leaders to take their own Bible seriously!

So, which way from the edge of the abyss?

Debt brought down both the Greek and Roman empires according to their own historians.

I attended a lecture by Michael Hudson in London a few years ago. He was asked about the poor being honest. "Of course the poor are honest," he quipped, ". That's why they're poor! You don't get rich by being honest!" The audience roared with slightly edgy laughter, and I thought about the dishonest steward in Luke 16 who found his own way from the edge of the abyss. But you cannot really serve God and Mammon. Can you?

Northenden's next 1,000 years? ~ the first twenty "Northenden Speaks" .

Members of Northenden Civic Society took part in a consultation in the village on Saturday 14th June as part of their scheme to influence council policies on planning and development in the area. A stall was set up on the forecourt of a supermarket

in the village, and passers by were asked to share their ideas about housing and parking, transport and leisure, the environment and business and much else.

Well over 100 people responded, either with verbal comments or on a general questionnaire form, and these answers will be analysed in the next week or so. The reaction was good, and even those who did not give definite answers were glad to have been asked. The people approached ranged from nine to ninety, from all sections of the community. Some people even came back specially to respond after taking their shopping home. Others were told about it by friends and came over deliberately. And there were some light hearted moments too. "I come from Vancouver, Canada, actually. I think that rules me out!"

It is early yet to give detailed results, but (ironically, given where the stall was set up) many people complained about the lack of "proper shops", and wanted more retail competition in the village. Another common complaint was the growing number of bars and take-aways. Positively, ideas were put forward for better facilities for young people; the need for public toilets (or a scheme for public access to shop toilets) at the War Memorial end of the village; and better car parking arrangements.

The results are being studied during late June, and should be published in summary form. They will also inform the proposals the Society puts forward for long term planning in the village, and its response to specific planning applications in coming years. While an "unofficial" exercise like this cannot actually make promises, it can hope to influence decisions. GSF

Note that the next Civic Society meeting is on Tues July 8th in the Methodist Vestry at 7.45pm, and that guests are welcome.

Don't forget the Farmers' Markets, now on the first and third Saturdays in the month, on the new parade.

The extra markets, on the third Saturday, don't seem so well attended (or is it just the weather?) Or is it that twice a month is too often for speciality food? We may find we have a different kind of market for the second session. Use it or lose it!

And Coming next Month ...

... thoughts on the Anglican church, after Lambeth...

... that Congestion Charge ... and much else.