

2 0 ~ J u n e ~ 0 9

Prayer for the Month.

Almighty God, who alone can bring order to the unruly wills and passions of sinful people, give us your generous help to love what you command and to set our hearts on what you promise; so that in all the changes and chances of this world our hearts may be surely fixed where lasting joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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Dear Friends,

Early in June there are two opportunities for us in Northenden to express political opinions and influence decisions. The first is the European Election, on the 4th, and the second is the consultation on a local civil parish council which closes on the 10th. My first point is not to waste these opportunities.

The second point is that we should use them for what they are intended to be, not as a way of getting at politicians in general, or having a swipe at the Government, or the like. So, in the European vote, vote for UKIP if you want to, not because they seem freer from sleaze than the Labour Party, but because you really do espouse their view of Britain and Europe; vote for the BNP (God forbid!) if you do hate a fair percentage of our fellow citizens, not because they are whiter than the Tory Party; vote Green because you reckon environmental issues are the most significant business Europe can engage in, not because you feel that the Liberal Democrats are no better than the rest; and vote Labour, Tory or Liberal if their vision of Europe matches best with your hopes, even if you are not impressed with the conduct of some of their members in the

If you do not vote the people you disagree with will get a bigger share of the influence!

Westminster parliament. But vote. Not only is it a privilege to be treasured, but if you do not it means that the people you disagree with who do will have a bigger proportion of the votes and so the seats!

And we should recognise the principles of natural justice here. Some allegations have been made against some politicians. Not all allegations are proven, and not all politicians are accused. And not all expenses and allowance systems are as easy to operate as they might be (for instance the way the Inland Revenue handle vicarages) so in some cases a plea that the person has misunderstood the system might actually be true. And further (to lift a point from Canon David Winter, quoting Jesus himself) "let him who is without fault cast the first stone." Critics in the press or elsewhere of MP's expenses claims ought in all fairness to consider their own expenses systems. That is not to excuse dishonesty, but it is to set this scandal in context.

And as for the more local issue, again, the question at stake is what will be good for Northenden, not whether you think all politicians are on the make, including ~ the implication is ~ the fellow in the next street whom you know personally and who is standing for your vote and isn't into politics but wants to be a good neighbour. And I suggest that the question should be put in terms of value for money in the village, rather than what will it cost me? So the responsibility lies with each one of us: so, for instance, I know the City council ought to repair that paving stone you almost tripped over last week, but will they do it this year, next year, sometime ... ? Is it worth paying a bit extra to have it sorted locally this year, before granny breaks her hip?

The question should be put in terms of value for money in the village

I was rather frustrated at the public meeting that the Civic Society convened that there was more heat than light shed on the expenses of a parish council. Supporters of a parish council did not bring forward figures, and its opponents seemed unwilling to listen even to those which were brought forward. The figures I gave last month were largely guesses, but not, I think, far off the mark. Let me flesh them out a little, based on the costs of a real Council I know of. Part time administrator's costs & salary: ca. £14,000; Chairman's expenses (phone, post, &c) £250 allowed; all other councillors' expenses (in total) £200 budgeted for. Given that benefits and reliefs from general council tax also apply to a parish precept my guess that administration would add £9 to a Band D charge was about right. Above that, you get what you pay for by way of extra or earlier services. I

listed some the competences of a parish council last month, but again let me refer you to [www . nalc . gov . uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk) for fuller details.

And if you fear that your parish councillors would be off junketing, you listen for their declarations of interest before each meeting, you ask for the figures under the freedom of information act, and you challenge them at the annual parish meeting.

To summarise, I hope that our decision on a local parish council, whichever way it goes, will be based on the merits of a parish council rather than the present demerits of some other levels of government.

On a very different note, I quite often get people coming into St. Wilfrid's church on Sunday afternoons asking if they can go up the tower. For safety reasons that cannot be done most Sundays, but on Saturday and Sunday 13th & 14th June we have open days, with enough people around to look after safety issues, and trips up the tower will be possible, so now's your chance. Spread the word! (And pray for fine weather!)

A couple of months ago there was a competition in the diocese to select everyone's favourite hymn. The ballot of course was rigged: there were only a dozen hymns on the list you could tick off. Well, in St. Wilfrid's we hope to select at least some of everyone's favourite hymns for a "Songs of Praise" service on 21st June at 6.30pm. Come along and sing your heart out.

We look at what Christian mean by "the Trinity" too.

And much else in this edition, ... So now read on.

Yours faithfully,

Greg Forster

Christian Aid Week ...

As I write it is too early to give any results from our house to house collections this year ~ that will follow next month I hope. Merely let me thank everyone who took part, collecting, organising, and contributing to this worthy and essential work.

G.S.F.

London Marathon

Caroline Johnstone writes ...

I would like to thank the ladies of the Women's Group who were kind enough to sponsor me. Despite lack of training due to a bad knee, then warm weather and very painful knees on the day, I managed to knock an hour off last year's time,

completing in 5 hrs 47 mins. The feeling of pride and achievement is wonderful after 26 miles! Thanks once again.

Whitsun ~ *life and hope*

Whitsun, or Pentecost, came at the end of May, and we begin this month in the "Whit" season. We are remembering and celebrating the gift of God's Holy Spirit to his church.

But how can you describe the work of God the Holy Spirit, and explain how he can bring God home to us here and now? God, you see, is not just a distant Creator, nor is he just a wise and compassionate figure in history, who died on a Cross to bring us forgiveness, and then left us to get as best we can. He promised to go on supporting us, and we experience that help as his Holy Spirit. Last month I wrote about some of the biblical images of the Spirit. This month, perhaps some of his actions.

In John's Gospel Jesus talks about the Advocate/comforter who will come. He will bring Jesus' teaching to mind as the disciples think back over it. He will guide them into the truth ~ the integrity ~ which they must teach and live by. So in the

The Spirit is at work when people's conscience is roused, they sense what is right, and recognise God's judgment on wrong.

words of the new Testament we encounter the Holy Spirit at work. He will also convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. He prompts people to feel their conscience challenging their

behaviour; he points to Jesus as a role model, and more than a role model for right living; he brings home to people how, without Jesus, we come under judgment and so need to turn to God for forgiveness and welcome. And not least, he does this through the church as much or more so than in isolation (which is a bit daunting! We are caught up in this too!). We are part of God's work through his Spirit, as we let his loving energy breeze through us.

So how may we encounter him? Last month I put forward some ways: in the beauty of a sunset, or the majesty of a gale, which both point to the creative wonder of God; in the calm of private prayer, or in the uplift as worship takes off and you know it is more than people singing heartily; in the peace as a disagreement is resolved, ... We meet him in many ways as he points us to God, if only our eyes and hearts are open. The bible speaks of the "fellowship" of the holy Spirit ~ the teamwork of the Spirit. Working together on some project for the church can

bring him home to us; meeting, reading, studying and praying together over God's word is part of our meeting with him too.

AND Trinity too G.S.F.

I don't pretend that the Christian teaching about the "Trinity" is easy to follow in detail, though you can state it quite baldly; The one and only God has revealed himself in action in three ways, and those ways reflect how he really is in himself. You can add that his revelation and action is for our benefit too, so this is not some esoteric conundrum that someone invented to tease us and complicate things, but is about how God reaches out to us.

We begin with a given of God's revelation to the Old Testament Israelites; he is one and only. "Hear O Israel the Lord your God is One." Everything else has to fit within that fact.

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is One ..."

Yet even in Old Testament revelation we find an awareness that God would reach out through his creative wisdom, or his inspiring word and spirit. You could not see or represent him, but he reached out to you. And there are the tantalising texts that hint at God's complex unity ~ "Let us make mankind in our own image ..." Is that just a figure of speech, or does it go deeper?

When we come to the New Testament we find Jesus endorsing that revelation of God's unity, but also accepting worship without rebuking those who gave it, and speaking of himself in more than individual terms. He takes to himself God's prerogatives ("Who can forgive sins but God alone?") His followers, raised as orthodox practicing Jews, write about him and honour him in divine terms: ("God was in Christ ...", "He is the image of the invisible God, ... "the whole fullness of Godhead dwelt in him bodily," and most tellingly, "The Word was God,..." and "The Word became flesh ...")

They may have been wrong, but I don't think we can argue that they

did not mean what they wrote. They were convinced that what they had seen and heard of Jesus was God in action and God speaking to them in person. Even some of our best loved images of Jesus, which seem just to be homely pictures, contain this fuller truth. When Jesus says "I am the good shepherd" he is

"I am the Good Shepherd" drawing a picture of pastoral care which warms and

Jesus was God in action,
God speaking in person.

reassures us, but he is also tapping into the Old Testament imagery of God as the reliable shepherd of his people which we find in Psalm 23, and explicitly in Ezekiel's prophecy (ch.34 vv11–16) ~ the shepherd who will come in person. As we speak of God we have to do justice to this revelation as well as the older affirmation of God's uniqueness. Out of this riddle sprang the teaching of the "Trinity".

Some people dismiss this as a later development, not found in the earliest level of Christianity. It may be true that some of the more technical language about Jesus came later, but the idea lies very early in Christian thought. My evidence for that comes from what St.Paul did not say! In some of his letters he is arguing against people who criticised him. He was immoral, they said, in saying the Jewish law could be sidestepped by gentile Christians. He refuted the charge, but he did not need to refute an accusation that he was sidestepping the Jewish insistence on the oneness of God by what he said about Jesus' "equality with God" (eg. Philippians ch 2 v5ff). His critics already shared common ground with him in that, well within the lifetime of Jesus' contemporaries and surviving disciples.

But is it not enough to talk simply about Jesus as God's son, without the fancy philosophical theological stuff of Trinity and the like? True, the New Testament does find it easy to use the story line of God sending his son into the world, born of a woman, under Jewish conditions, to bring freedom (Gal.4, Matt.1, etc.), but if that is all you say then it leaves some awkward questions. Was God letting someone else carry the can? Was God dumping the dirt and the pain of making amends for sin, and bringing freedom, onto someone else? Was he copping out and letting someone else carry the can, even if that someone else was closely linked to him? This point, quite apart from the fact that if you believe that there is only one God you cannot then talk about a second, lesser divine being who is his son, pushed the church to a conclusion which St.Paul had expressed in 2 Corinthians ch 5. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." However you understood or explained it, God and Jesus belong personally and inextricably together. God took the rap. He did not pass the buck.

Before I try to explain how this might be, let me again say that this is not some obscure theological sleight of hand, devised to entertain the leisured elite over their after dinner port.

It is about what God did to put you and me back on a right footing with him. "God so loved that he gave his one and only son..." So to talk about the Trinity is to explore the depths of God's love for his creation, which goes to the heart of his own being from before time, as well as finding its expression in a very particular time and place and person.

So how can you understand this apparent contradiction? How can God be one, and yet seem not to be one alone? That is more difficult for us with our 20th century minds than it was 1800 years ago. We are trained to think of reality in terms of material science and individuality. We measure someone's nature in terms of DNA as much as character. Within its limits that is a good system, and thank God for it, but there is more to reality, our forebears would have taught us. A person is to be understood in terms of inner qualities and valued for innate moral as well as material substance. A person is a person because he shares in "humanity", not just because he has a particular DNA. They saw that humanity as a reality independent of its millions of individual parts, and just as real as each one ~ who indeed is only real because he shares in that greater reality, or substance, to use a word from the creed. (Perhaps we might be better people if we took that moral vision of humanity on board.)

So lift that way of understanding what is to the level of God. Call the reality "divinity", or "Godhead". That reality is one, undivided ~ it is also personal and moral and loving and holy; not just a philosophical abstraction, a "Father" not a "Force", but that too is a different story. But if we are human because we share in that moral reality which is humanity, the same thought can apply, in reverse, to God. For someone ~ Jesus, or by analogy, the Holy Spirit ~ to share in that divinity does not diminish divinity or divide it. "The whole fullness of Godhead was there in Christ, substantially." (And if you ask, Why not a foursome? the answer is, in brief, that he has revealed himself in three ways, or forms of expression ~ persons, to use the word in its technical sense, which differs from modern colloquial use.)

Does that seem complicated? Probably, but if you can understand God that implies you are a bit brainier than he is! That is not an excuse for being obscure; in fact I am sure that God is more wonderful than this, but if we say nothing we open the way to ideas which fail to do him justice. There are other

ways of trying to understand ~ a person can be wife, mother and daughter at the same time: a mind can hold memory, conscience and foresight all in one ~ but this, I think, is the fullest.

Northenden Methodist Church.

Palatine Road.

Minister: the Revd. David Bown,
5 Kenworthy Lane, Northenden, M 22 4 JF
0161 998 – 2158

Sunday Services.

June 7 th	11.00am	The Rev. David Hardman
	6.30pm	United Service.
14 th	11.00am	The Rev. Margaret Hall
21 st	11.00am	Mr. T. Fawthrop
28 th	11.00am	The Rev. David Sanders (Holy Communion)
July 5 th	11.00am	Morning worship
	6.30pm	United Service at St. Wilfrid's

Community Lunches

Wednesday 10th June ... and ...

Wednesday 24th June ~ Noon till 1.30pm

Fun Bingo Sat.. 27th June, Noon – 2.00pm

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,

⁴
The Children's Society.

The shop in Northenden is doing very well ~ whether that is as a result of the economic situation or in spite of it is anyone's guess. In the financial year 2007-08 they made £56K, and in the next year, April 2008 – 09, they made £91½K. Well done! What is more the Northenden branch is up in the top three ~ out of 17 I think they said ~ in this Children's Society region for their performance.

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 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.

June 7 th	10.30am	Family Service & Parade
	6.30pm	United Evening Service.
14 th	10.30am	Holy Communion
	6.30pm	Evening Worship
21 st	10.30am	Baptism and Communion
	6.30pm	Songs of Praise
28 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
	6.30pm	Holy Communion
July 5 th	10.30am	Family Communion & Parade Service
	6.30pm	United Service Venue to be announced

Drop in ... 2 – 5pm.

St. Wilfrid's church is open each Sunday

from 2.00 – 5pm,

for prayer, visiting and just looking round, enquiries about baptisms, weddings, ancestor hunting, ... &c.

It's All Happening ..., for your diaries ...

Sat. 30th Summer Fair: church hall, 2.00 – 4.00pm

Mon. 1st June Women's Group, 7.45 for 8.00pm

Wed. 3rd Bible Study, Rectory, 8.00pm

Ditto, Weds. 10th, 17th, 24th.

Thurs. 4 th	PCC Meeting, Church Hall, 7.30pm.
Thurs 11 th	Deanery United Service.
Sat. 13 th	10.30 – 5.00 Church & Tower Open Day
Sun. 14 th	12.30 – 5.30 Church & Tower Open Day
Sat. 20 th	School Summer Fair.
Sun. 21 st	6.30pm Songs of Praise service in church.
Sat. 27 th	10 – 11.30am Coffee Morning; Church Hall.
Mon. 6 th July	Women's Group ~ Traffic Safety. David Holmes.
Thurs. 9 th	PCC meeting.

Some details of Women's Group meetings are not yet available ~ we are still waiting for replies from potential speakers ~ but the meetings will be happening regardless on the first Mondays in June and July, despite bank holidays and the like!

FROM THE REGISTERS;

IN MEMORIAM ...

Alice McGowan (formerly West View Rd.) 85,
 Mary Moore (formerly Brett St.) 85.
 Stanley Codling (Patterdale Rd.) 76

Baptised, ... on **Sun. 26th A** pril

Siobhan Katie Clucas, Samuel John Bennett.

Songs of Praise ~

On Sunday 21st June, at 6.30pm
 Instead of the conventional Evening Prayer style service
 we intend to worship through song.

Come along yourselves, and bring your friends
 as we sing some well known and well loved hymns.

We shall use the organ for accompaniment,
 and no doubt there will be refreshments afterwards.

Magpie ...

... was chatting the other day with someone who had got stuck in Manchester during the St. George's Day parade. The what...?, you may ask. So did Magpie, since the publicity was somewhat lacking, at least in this neck of the woods. Anyway, there it was, in full swing, on Sunday 19th April. (The obvious time to celebrate St. George, after all). There were a number of people around, so there must have been some publicity. And

who was on parade but some belly dancers, and a Scottish military pipe band in full highland dress. All very English, look you!

... has heard that the resolution put forward by Manchester Diocese to the General (national) Synod, or "parliament", of the C of E about religion and science may be debated this coming July. So often now we are subjected to a drip feed of anti-faith ideas or propaganda linked with science, yet science is merely the process of finding out and trying to understand what Gods already knows. The understanding can be difficult, but that does not mean God is not there. Watch the media in July to see whether it gets picked up. The aim? To stress how Faith in God can go hand in hand with the most rigorous science, and how the popular antagonism between Darwin and religion is a modern urban myth. And how!

... has also heard that discussion is continuing about a possible hydroelectric scheme at Northenden Weir. Watch that space. Power to the people, carbon to the back burner!

... is saddened that a good Northenden business can go under because a big client can close without paying its debts, and then reopen under another name with a clean slate ~ that's snide. That's dirty. And it's not the first time that Magpie has heard a story like it. Is this an act for Parliament to clean up?

... but is glad to see the old Woolworth's site back in commission, as a bright new freezer-and-almost-anything-else-in-the-way-of-food store. It's not all gloom, after all. Welcome!

... will miss the annual meeting of the Friends of Riverside Park, but wishes them more strength to their elbows, knees, voices and anything else that improves the park: they've now got a paved path by the water under Palatine Rd.

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... it seems that Magpie's thoughts about vandalism last month were not as complete as they might have been. The agency which was behind the clear felling of part of the wood at the bottom end of Kenworthy Lane was the Highways Agency, who own the land, it seems. It was to do with drainage, but the drainage of the motorway, which is channelled down that side, rather than on the river side of the road. The work was done hurriedly, and so did not break the law about felling during the bird nesting season, but it was so hurried that even head office did not know that the contractors were on site! There was a consultation, even though the Agency, as a Government offshoot, does not need planning permission, but only among the immediate neighbours, and the map that showed what was to happen had been cut down in size so much that it was illegible. And the long term plan is to create a wetland which will contain the surplus water and become a wildlife habitat.

This raises a number of questions, of which the greatest is to do with whether even well meaning Government agencies should be allowed to bypass proper planning consultation. Who designed the original drainage? Can you solve a flooding problem by making a pond? Could you solve it better (and more cheaply) by cleaning the drains? And (perhaps I'm too cynical) how many morbid Tesco trolleys will it sustain before it ceases to be ecologically viable?

Magpie also noticed a number of students from M.M.U. filming in St. Wilfrid's church during the middle of May. Apart from being an assignment for which they were being assessed, what was it all about? If he got the gist right, it was this: what would happen after global warming has taken its toll? How would people live? Where might they find shelter and safety? What social tensions and divisions would spring up? Quite apocalyptic in its way. And perhaps it is something we should think about more seriously in churches and communities?

Someone has asked if the Civic Society should have a climate change policy. Does the City Council have one which is not contradicted by its economic growth policy?

And now for something completely different. What, to your mind, are the most moving sights you can see? Magpie was on Altrincham Rd when an ambulance came along, siren blaring. He was reminded of another occasion, when solid lines of traffic blocked a road both ways. As an ambulance approached; cars moved aside, like water from a ship's prow. Humanity at its best!