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Prayer for the Month.

Almighty and everlasting God,
who of your tender love towards mankind
sent your son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon himself our human nature,
and to suffer death upon the cross,
grant that we may follow the example
of his patience and humility.
and so also come to share in his resurrection
and the glory of his eternal life.

Through him, our Lord Jesus Christ
Amen

Based on the ASB collect for Palm Sunday and Holy Week.

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane.
0161 998 – 2615

Dear Friends,

Firstly, an invitation ~ to the various special services this month in all our churches. Mothering Sunday is a splendid celebration and we look forward to welcoming mothers, grandmothers, god-mothers, and even mothers-in-law, together with the rest of the family at the services on March 2nd.

And then, at times more sombre, at times more joyful; the various services marking the events of Holy Week and Easter itself: at St. Wilfrid's on Maundy Thursday at 10am (ish! ~ after the school service) or 7.30pm, and then, in St. Wilfrid's or the Methodist Church, at 10.30am on Good Friday. Occasions to remember, thoughtfully, all that Jesus gave to us and did for us in his life and death. And on Easter Day! Joy and triumph, as we enthuse over his resurrection. (Yes, enthuse. I was looking for an alternative to celebrate, and this will do, but it actually makes the point that this is something to be enthusiastic about, anywhere and everywhere, as well as having a nice sing about it in church).

So what is it that we celebrate and enthuse about? The beginning of that answer ought to be obvious, but I did read recently a suggestion from the noted atheist theologian Richard

Dawkins that Jesus did not exist, and that Christianity was the creation of others, notably St. Paul. He ought to know better. It is quite reasonable to argue that Jesus was not who Christians claim that he was and is, but that a man called Jesus of Nazareth lived and died as a Jewish religious teacher in the early first century is borne out in Jewish and Roman sources as well as the obvious Christian ones. So we celebrate his life, and learn from his teaching ~ but of course there is more.

We learn from Jewish sources that he died, executed, on Passover eve. The allegations were connected with the power behind his miracles, and with leading people to forsake traditional Judaism. Christians would agree, but would assert that Jesus' power was God's, and that he was right to call for a change from the old ways. We would add that there was also a deeper purpose behind his death. Something was being transacted, actually being done, through his death. It wasn't just a show or a misjudged publicity stunt. No single way of describing what was being done is adequate, but he was breaking the power of wrong in people's lives; he was bearing the effects of wrong on people's lives; he was bringing forgiveness to bear upon people's lives. "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Jesus' death, "under the Procurator Pontius Pilate" as recorded by the Roman historian Tacitus, had a significance for all of us, far greater than most people could have expected, and that sombre event is well worth celebrating and enthusing about. "Amazing love, / how can it be, / that Christ my Lord should die for me!" sang Charles Wesley.

We can excuse Prof. Dawkins' doubts about what happened next. Even those there at the time found it hard to credit. On the third day after Jesus' execution his grave was found to be empty, and then his followers began to meet him, sometimes in closed rooms, sometimes on the open road or on sunny hillsides; he ate with them, and on one occasion cooked their breakfast. His followers were convinced that this was a real experience, not something imaginary or ghostly. They also knew as well as any 20th century sceptic that this sort of thing does not happen every day (not yet, anyway). A couple of generations later a lawyer called Tertullian could argue "I believe because it is incredible" ~ in other words, no one in those hard-nosed times would have invented this story! St. Paul (that useful scapegoat for people who don't want to believe the historic account of

Christian origins) was even blunter: "If Christ was not raised from the dead we are of all people most to be pitied," because we are foisting a falsehood on God, quite apart from the beatings, shipwrecks and other indignities he lived through for the sake of what he was convinced of. So there is evidence ~ admittedly unique, but historical ~ of this extraordinary event. Our celebration is justified!

But it is not just Christ's resurrection that we are celebrating; his life beyond death is a promise of our life beyond death too. In our love and trust for him we receive the benefits he has already offered us. "Bold I approach / the eternal throne / and claim the crown through Christ my own!" (Wesley again.)

Yours faithfully, Greg Forster

Out of the mouths of babes ... G.S.F.

... or rather of six-year-olds! Every so often we arrange visits to the church by children from St. Wilfrid's or other schools. They look round, learn what parts of the church are called, and what goes on at them. They feel the different items which make up the building: carved wood, smoothed stone, and so on ~ depending on what the visit is for and how old they are.

And they get to ask me questions. Some are matter of fact: "how old is the church?" "Do you live here?" "Where do those little doors go?", "Why are there pictures in the windows?" Some are more challenging. Here are some from the last visit, by five and six year olds; "Where did God come from?" "How did God make everything?" (i.e. what methods did he use?) "How does Santa Claus know whether you've been good or not?"

Answers, appropriate for children of such mature years, to the Rectory please. But make them answers which will still hold good when they are sixteen ~ but sadly by then they will have perhaps learned not to ask such profound questions.

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,

Northenden Methodist Church.

Palatine Road.

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

Sunday Services.

- Mar. 2nd 11.00am Morning Service; Mr Len Reindel
 6.30pm United Service at Northenden Methodist Church.
- Mar. 9th 11.00am The Revd. David Hardman
- Mar. 16th Palm Sunday.
 11.00am The Revd. David Bown
- Mar. 21st Good Friday ~
 10.30am Meditation
- Mar. 23rd Easter Day
 11.00am The Rev. Malcolm Purdy
- Mar. 30th 11.00am Home Service
- Apr. 6th 11.00am Morning Service
 6.30pm United Evening Worship

COMMUNITY LUNCHES ...

2nd and 4th Wednesdays in March ~
12th & 26th
12 noon to 1.30pm

Fun Bingo: Sat. 15th March, noon to 2.00pm.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

" Don't dump it, donate it !!! "

This is the interesting slogan on a poster from the Tree of Life Centre, St. Mark's URC church, Oatlands Rd., down in Wythenshawe. At their community shop they are prepared to accept unwanted furniture, household items and white goods. Contact: 0161 437-0835. "Help us to help others," they say.

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.

Mar. 2nd 10.30am Family Service and Parade for
Mothering Sunday

6.30pm United Service @ Northenden Methodist Church

Mar. 9th 10.30am Holy Communion (Passion Sunday)
6.30pm Evening Worship

Mar. 16th 10.30am Holy Communion (& Baptism) (Palm Sun.)
6.30pm Evening Worship

March 20th Maundy Thursday. Communion 7.30pm

Mar. 21st Good Friday Morning Worship 10.30am

Mar. 23rd EASTER DAY

10.30am Family Communion

6.30pm Evening Worship

Mar. 30th 10.30am Morning Prayer

6.30pm Holy Communion.

Apr. 6th 10.30am Family Communion & Parade Service

6.30pm United Evening Worship.

Please note how the evening services now take place at 6.30pm

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

Sat. Mar. 1st Don't forget the Farmers' Market

10am – ca. 4.00pm on Palatine Rd.

Mon. 3rd Women's Group. ~ Rectory 7.45 for 8pm start

Wed. 5th "Emmaus" study and discussion. Rectory. 7.45pm

Also Weds. 12th, 19th., 7.45 for 8.00pm start, 9.15 finish.

Sat. 29th Coffee Morning, Church Hall, 10.00 – approx 11.30am.

Apr. 7th Women's Group, as above.

March PCC to be arranged.

Note also the School's Easter Service will be on Maundy Thursday at about 9.15am. Parents, and other friends of the school, are welcome to join the children for this.

WOMEN'S GROUP meets in the Rectory at
7.45 pm for 8.00pm start on Monday March 3rd

Church Embroidery

Claudine Harriot-Boyer

Mon. 5th May (the bank holiday); a Concert, given by members of Lyra, the Russian group whose last visit was so successful.

From the **R**egisters ~ **I**n **M**emoriam ...

Florence Griffiths (Robt. Owen Gdns) 93,

Susanna Farrow (Stonehaven) 90,

Violet Gerrard (Topcroft Cl.) 90,

David Woodhouse (Greenway) 57.

Baptised, on **S**unday 10th **F**ebruary

Lucy Christiana Davis

Maggie ...

... has visited the proposed site of Councillor Lyons' Folly. This is to be the narrowest detached house in England, so they say, and will be a sterling addition to Northenden's tourist circuit. Visit the weir, and then make your way along Allanson Road to number 28½, to see how to really squeeze them in. This fourteen foot wide (yes one-four feet) addition to the housing stock of the village got through the council's planning committee on the casting vote of the chairman, Cllr. Lyons, who sits for a ward in North Manchester. Apparently a proposed site visit never took place. (Perhaps a good thing ~ their tour bus would never

have got along Allanson Rd. ~ the parking is already so tight.) The ... er ... edifice will have a 10 cm (4 in.) gap on either side, which is about wide enough for chip papers and plastic trays to blow down, and a fat rat to squirm through, but not wide enough for maintenance, or to clear the bridged damp courses. So, no longer trek to Conwy to see Ty bach, the narrowest house (7ft 6in, but an end terrace squeezed by the town wall on one side, and a lady in full Welsh regalia at the door). Come to sunny Northenden by the bracing Mersey and visit the narrowest folly in the land, a bijou detached residence. When will it get its blue plaque?

... finds signs of ... well, something ... all around. The first crocus was seen flowering in the churchyard on January 23rd. A week later, high in the Shropshire hills a red campion (normally April or May?) was seen in full flower, admittedly in a very sheltered spot, but more than that, bumbling purposefully across an open grassy ride 1000 ft high on the Long Mynd, what was to be seen but a woolly bear caterpillar? Meanwhile, the first bees were seen in Northenden on Feb. 8th.

... landed near the Tatton Arms the other day, to see an intrepid canoeist going over the weir, with some caution, but complete success. Rather him than Magpie ~ but then, Magpies aren't ducks, are they? (So that's your first ornithological lesson for the month out of the way, then.) He was actually hoping to find out a bit more about the Tatton, and was pleased to see that repairs and improvements are well under way. The broken skylight is slated over, dry and secure, and the cracked wall patched. The workmen said that it was even hoped to be up and running in a month, though that may be ambitious. Here's hoping, though. A good quality riverside restaurant is long overdue in Northenden.

... and incidentally, along with the odd canoeist what weight of water do you think goes over the weir?

... and even more incidentally, how would it be if there was a regular canoeing facility based near the weir ~ not just the portage steps, but somewhere canoeists could use as a base. The idea has been around for a while. Watch this space! Has it found its hour?

... work to remodel the service road in the new parade area of Palatine Rd has started ~ and by the time you read this may well be finished. A brighter village! A better market area? More parking? Easier parking? (Here's yet more hoping!) Yes,

here's another space for us to watch. Magpie has been watching it on and off for twenty years or so, when Cllr. Gerry Carroll was first approached about improvements, and got told that it couldn't be done, because of all the pipes and things underground. The wheels of Manchester Council grind slow ... !

... has heard that Northenden has hit the national headlines (or perhaps the footlines) with a daring but unsuccessful armed raid on the Post Office. The attacker was described as a "little old lady" of between 65 and 70, who made off when the alarm was sounded. Is that Good News, or Bad News?

The Archbishop and the Law.

G.S.F.

It almost seems as if the first requirement for an archbishop of Canterbury is a mouth, and the second is a foot to put in it ~ or perhaps the real first requirement is the ability, or the advisers, to see how the press will fail to grasp the subtleties of what you say. Thus it was that in mid February Rowan Williams gained the headlines "What a burkah!" and the like, for comments about Sharia ~ Islamic ~ law.

It was not surprising that the press grasped, and misunderstood, these comments. The mix of an Anglican archbishop and Sharia is a heady one. They were reporting the advance publicity about a lecture that the AB of C was giving to academic lawyers, at the heart of the legal network in London. It was to be chaired by the Lord Chief Justice, no less. It was part of a series about Islam and the British Law, so he was talking about what he had been asked to talk about, and pitching it at a level which his audience would appreciate, even if the press could not. And I have to admit, having read the text twice,. (On www.archbishopofcanterbury.org.uk) that for non-lawyers it takes some understanding. What was lacking (so far as I can see from his own and the C of E website) was the advance press release that should have gone out, telling the press in simple terms what his point was, and spoon feeding them with headlines. What he did say early in the lecture was that even Islamic scholars will often now avoid the term Sharia because of all the bad connotations that it has (though they are based, it is claimed, on the archaic interpretations by a few Sharia schools in some countries only). The press did not take this hint or read his text carefully enough (if they actually managed to read it!)

So what was the AB of C saying? He was certainly not suggesting that for some people or in some areas Islamic law

should take precedence over the Law of the Land. He was pointing out that in some circumstances already the Law of the Land does recognise Jewish and Sharia courts for arbitration purposes (and for that matter Ecclesiastical courts within their own narrow jurisdiction). He acknowledged the danger that individuals might be pressurised into signing away rights and freedoms which the Law of the Land protects, and so, I think, suggested that greater clarity about the relationship between the Law and these other tribunals or panels might protect such rights.

But what he was trying to say to these lawyers and legislators, I think, was something deeper and more significant. By asking them to see that other religious jurisdictions are already accepted within British Law he was suggesting that recent trends in the opposite direction are inconsistent. He reminded the lawyers that recently secular Law has become less and less inclined to recognise different cultural and religious motivations for conscientious behaviour (he cited the recent refusal to allow Catholic adoption agencies to decline to work with prospective gay adopters). He suggested that this stemmed from a lack of appreciation that people do not simply owe allegiance to The State, but to various overlapping communities and moral networks, most of which are wholesome, and which form the basis of their identity and aspirations. He suggested that to ignore this would have the effect not of integrating all citizens in a united kingdom of shared values and common rights, but of alienating individuals and groups from the commonwealth which was denying their concerns.

I hope that I have done Dr. Williams justice. I have the text of his address if anyone wants to work through it. But was he right?

Given the caution within his actual address, it is well worth the legal establishment taking note of it. As a method of arbitration between people whose approach to fairness is based on the same cultural presuppositions Sharia has as much to offer as the Orthodox Jewish Beth Din, or the English Quaker lawyer on the high street. To recognise this more formally than at present, and thereby to pin down and restrict possible abuses, might be no bad thing. There remain practical problems, such as possible loss (by women in particular) of what in this country are regarded as fundamental human rights, or the fact that there are apparently 73 different forms of Sharia.

Taken further, or reported in (say) Nigeria, where some Muslims are campaigning to impose their harsh version of Sharia on non-Muslims in a mixed community, his remarks are, let us say, distinctly inappropriate. Though he may be the first Archbishop of Canterbury from outside England since the Reformation, (being a Welshman) it is an other-world, rather than a wider-world, perspective that he brings to the job!

But having said that, there are features of Islamic law which offer a constructive, critical contrast to western capitalist law ~ and I am thinking about their banking practices, which can be worked within current British law, but which in some ways are closer to what the Bible teaches about money-lending than conventional British ~ possibly post-Christian ~ practices.

So, finally, I would go along with the Archbishop in challenging the easy assumption of secularist legislators that they can ignore or override the religious moral inspiration of many citizens, not least because their ideas of equality and respect do have Christian roots.

St. Wilfrid's Church ~ Diary Dates 2008.

Here is a list of dates for your diaries going on to the end of the year.

- April. Church Annual Meeting. Sun. 26th 11.30am.
- May. Ascension Day. 1st. School Service 9.15am
Deanery Communion, At St. Paul's, Withington. 7.30pm.
Mon. 5th. "Lyra" Concert in Church, (7.30pm ?)
Whit Sunday 11th.
Christian Aid Week, 12th – 18th.
- May 31st/June 1st Church "Open Days" ~ displays and Tower.
- June 5th Folk Music Concert. 7.30pm in Church.
Confirmation 22nd. @ 3pm. Venue to be announced.
School Summer Fair, Sat. 28th.
- July ? Thur 17th. School "Leavers" service (t.b.c.)
- Sept. Open Days ("Heritage Open Days") 13/14th.
"Back to Church Sunday" 28th.
- Oct. Harvest Festival. Sun. 5th.
(School service date to be arranged)
St. Wilfrid's Day Sun 12th. (no "open days" this year)
Confirmation. Sun. 26th. 3pm. Venue t.b.a.

Nov. NB that the RBL Remembrance Day parade is now at the Methodist Church (9th Nov.)

Dec. Folk Carols ~ probably Thurs. 4th. Dec. 7.30pm.
Carol Service. Sun.21st 3.00pm.
School Services to be arranged.
Christmas Day. 25th Dec. (as usual)

Coffee Mornings will probably remain on the last Saturday of the month if the Farmers' Market is retained ~ but watch the monthly diary slot. Family Services all fall on 1st Sundays this year.

Money Matters!

Greg Forster

When the Church Council at St. Wilfrid's set its targets for 2008, in January, one of those targets was that we should break even on routine expenditure and income in the year. (The shortfall in 2007 looked as if it would turn out at about £5,000) When they came to set the budget for the year ~ not actually possible till February ~ the size of that task became apparent.

When we looked at the likely expenditure of the church this year, which includes an increased bill for heating as prices rise, repairs to the church hall roof (major ones, completed already), and an increased "quota" towards the costs that the Diocese meets centrally, we found that it would probably be over £50,000 pounds.

Then when we looked at the likely income we found a shortfall. Investments are likely to provide £7,000, income from the hall £5,000, planned (promised) giving perhaps £10,000, and loose collections £3,000. There is other income ~ fees, sales of small items, donations, events and so on, but the total we came up with was less than £40,000. I think most readers will be able to do the sums! The full details will be available as part of our financial report at the Annual Meeting in late April.

So what, once we have finished praying, can be done about this? We have already increased the price of Concord, and will be reducing the print order ~ it is useful to have spares to give away, but we honestly have more than we need for that ~ but this will not make much impression in £11,000. We can cut back on one or two things, but not easily or properly, since we are engaged in Christian service, not simply money management.

The real answer, longer term, is increased income, which will not come from investments (interest rates are going down, and some of our capital will have to be used to maintain the 130 year old roof of the church, among other things). We may be able to increase use of the hall a bit, and occasional extra "efforts" do help, though they will not make up the shortfall we are talking about, and we are probably doing as much on that front as we can reasonably do. In the end, I believe, it comes down to what people can give towards their worship and service. (With possible help from the tax man ~ if you pay tax and are willing to "gift-aid" what you give. I can explain if anyone wants to know how.)

Easter? Already?

Greg Forster

No, I'm not going to repeat all that I wrote last month, but simply to remind you to look back at what I wrote about it then, if you need to. It's tied to the Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox.

All things Bright and Beautiful ...

G.S.F.

Just a thought ~ as I was gazing out of our kitchen window one morning cradling a cup of tea! What sort of birds do we have in Northenden? Is there a "Northenden List"? I know quite a number of you are interested, so how about putting a list together? Pass on a note of your sightings to me, for listing here.

Here are the ones I could see then and there: Sparrow, Bullfinch, Siskin, Goldcrest, Blackbird, Robin, Magpie, Goldfinch.