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Prayer for the Month

**Eternal God, the source of all authority and wisdom,
hear our prayer for those who govern;**

**Give to Elizabeth our Queen grace as a focus of loyalty
and unity for all our different peoples and communities;**

**Give to the parliaments, assemblies and councils of
these islands, wisdom and skill, imagination and energy,
fairness and compassion;**

**Give to the members of the European institutions
vision, and humility, understanding and integrity;**

**That all may live in peace and happiness, truth, justice
and prosperity, through Jesus Christ the Lord of all.**

Amen

Based on a prayer for those who govern, from "Common Worship".

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane,
Manchester, M 22 4 NQ
0161 – 998-2615

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Dear Friends,

You can hardly have escaped noticing that there is an election on. I do not want to make a public endorsement of any candidate (not least because, at the time of writing, we do not have a full list of all the possible candidates). What I would say, strongly, is that we should all vote. Especially after the expenses scandals of the last year or so there is a temptation to say with Shakespeare, "a plague on all your houses". That is a luxury we cannot indulge in. It merely gives parties and policies which we would not approve of, but which are able to motivate their supporters, a greater share in the vote and a claim to influence which they do not deserve. So vote, and vote on the basis of a moral consideration of what each party is proposing, and a personal evaluation of how each candidate will be able to work for the ward or constituency, the city and the nation.

However, I am currently in correspondence with clerical colleagues in Northenden Ward, and with political candidates, in connection with the presence of a BNP candidate on the ballot papers on May 6th. I view this as a distressing development, as

they do. To develop a party and its policies around racism appeals to the least admirable side of human nature. We shall probably be writing to the South Manchester Reporter about this, though it may not get published. The MEN group of papers have a policy of giving the BNP as little publicity as they can, and not offering them the chance to demand a right of reply.

We are still discussing precise wording, but (as I have suggested above) our concerns are that people *should* use their votes to show that the politics of racial division are not supported by the overwhelming majority of residents. An abstention merely allows extremists to gain a larger percentage of the vote, and does not help towards the good governance of our City or our Country. We recognise that elections are a period when robust debates take place on all subjects, but this should be done in the spirit of common respect for all people, regardless of ethnic origin or religious belief.

As a Christian minister I am also concerned that the BNP has sometimes claimed in its literature to be defending Christian values. I find that hard to credit. What planet do they live on? Tolerance and respect are at the heart of Christianity. St. Paul argued so vehemently that "in Christ there is no Greek or Barbarian, slave or free" ~ in other words, that racial and class distinctions have no place in Christian values. Perhaps the best known of Jesus' parables is the story of the Good Samaritan ~ the outsider who behaves better than the insiders. Tolerance and respect may be difficult virtues even for Christians to live by, but you do not encourage them by promoting intolerance.

May is a full month for other stories too. Christian Aid Week, Whitsun, Rogation-tide, not to mention Popes and Volcanoes, oh, and the little matter of marriage. There is something on these in the rest of Concord, so now read on.

Yours faithfully,

Greg Forster

Age Concern ...

In connection with G.M. Police Age Concern are offering free security checks on the homes of people over 60. For more information ring 0845 026 1055. (The Rector has a flier with a bit more detail).

.....
N orthenden F armers' Markets ~

There is a market in May, as usual, first Saturday ~ the 1st., 10am to 4pm. Meat, cheese, fish, vegetables, pies, sweets, coffee and cake ... roll up! Food that is good for you and good for the village.

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 Methodist Church.

Palatine Road.

Minister: the Revd. David Bown,

5 Kenworthy Lane, Northenden, M 22 4 JF

0161 998 – 2158

Sunday Services.

May 2nd 11.00am Morning Service; details to be announced
6.30pm United Service at St. Wilfrid's Church.

9th 11.00am Mr. T. Fawthrop

Christian Aid Week.

16th 11.00am Mr. G. Williams

23rd. Pentecost 11.00am Holy Communion

The Revd. David Bown

30th 11.00am **Trinity Sunday** The Rev. David Sanders

June 6th 11.00am Morning Worship

6.30pm United Evening Worship.

Community Lunch ...

... Wednesday 12th May, from 12.00 – 1.30pm

Fun Bingo will be on Sat. 29th May, from Noon till 2.00pm

Northenden Players.

The Players' next production is

Round and Round the Garden, by Alan Ayckbourn.

in the Hall at Northenden Methodist Church, Victoria Rd.

May 16th & 18th – 22nd

For details or booking, ring 445-6868

St. Wilfrid's Church,

Ford Lane. (Off Church Rd.)

Rector: Greg Forster (998-2615)



www . stwilfridsnorthenden . org . uk

Services, & c.:

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 (in both cases) on Family Service Sundays.

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

May 2 nd	10.30am Family Communion		
	6.30pm United Service at St. Wilfrid's		
9 th	10.30am Holy Communion		
	6.30pm Evening Worship		
Thu. 13th	Ascension Day 10am	Holy Communion	
16 th	10.30am Holy Communion		
	6.30pm Evening Worship		
23rd	Pentecost (Whitsun) 10.30am	Holy Communion	
	6.30pm Evening Worship		
30 th	10.30am Morning Worship		
	6.30pm Holy Communion		
June 6 th	10.30am Family Communion & Parade Service		
	6.30pm United Service at Northenden Methodist Church		

Drop in ... 2.00pm – 5.00pm.

*St. Wilfrid's church is open each Sunday
for prayer and peace, visiting and just looking round, enquiries
about baptisms, weddings, ancestor hunting, ... &c.*

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

CHAPTERS

@ St. Wilfrid's Hall

On Saturdays, from 10am till noon we are selling
second hand books in the Church Hall for St. Wilfrid's church, so

please come yourself, tell your friends, and let us have any old books, too ~ we welcome new stock.

(Psst! ~ there's tea cakes too!)

Tue. 4th May 7.30pm Archdeacon's Visitation, Stretford.

Wed. 5th 8.00pm Bible Study ~ Rectory

Thu. 6th 7.30pm P.C.C., Church Hall.

Mon. 10th 7.45 for 8.00pm. Women's Group, Rectory.

Wed. 12th, 19th, 26th. 8.00pm Bible Study ~ Rectory

Mon. 24th 7.30pm Deanery Synod ~ Burnage.

Sat. 29th 10am ... Coffee Morning meets *Chapters*. Church Hall

Thu. June 3rd Summer Song ~ folk singing the summer in
in St. Wilfrid's Church, 7.30pm, with Kieron Hartley and folk.

Women's Group ...

... meets on Monday **10th** May ~ again avoiding the Bank Holiday. The speaker is Helen Gannaway, V.N. She is head nurse at Buchanan's Veterinary Group, in Urmston, and she will be talking about being a Vet. Nurse.

We are investigating a possible trip in June to Gorton Monastery ~ but they do not take bookings that far in advance.

FROM THE REGISTERS;

Baptised in the parish church on Sunday 18th April
Benjamin Owen Birchenough, Alfie William Moore.

Married on 10th April ...

Kerry Ann Hamlin to Gary Husband.

In Memoriam ...

Arthur Denny (Greenway) 79, Joyce Power (Howard Rd.) 76.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme.

Not, perhaps, a heading that will set your pulse racing, but a significant one. At present the Tax people refund VAT on repair work on "listed" churches like St. Wilfrid's (One of Mr. Brown's best ideas). That saved us £9,000 last year. They are threatening to remove this allowance, but still expect us to maintain the building to a special standard. That's a challenge you might put to our parliamentary candidates.

Marriage Matters

GSF

One of the Conservative policies for the election draws attention to Marriage. I am not sure that a bonus of £150 per

year for married couples where one is not working will achieve a great deal ~ though it will no doubt be welcome. (Strictly, a non-working spouse would have £1295 worth of tax to compensate for, but would anyone dare offer that allowance nowadays?) But it does remind us that marriage has implications in the legal and taxation system, as well as being a form of relationship between a man and a woman. I remember when the married couple's allowance was part of the tax system, and how it was taken out because, if I remember rightly, married women felt (or were supposed to feel) demeaned by being a bolt-on extra in their husbands' tax returns, when co-habiting couples claimed separate allowances which left them better off (and the tax-man poorer!)

I suppose that unless tax is actually abolished someone somewhere will complain that the system treats them unfairly. When it comes to encouraging marriage, however, there are greater reasons for marrying than £3 per week off your tax bill. Some are about tax, and others to do with who we are as people.

Firstly, the money bit. As the law now stands marriage does confer advantages on a married couple ~ up to £300,000 worth of advantage, for instance, when it comes to inheritance tax. It clarifies inheritance rights if you forget to make a will, and confers some security of tenure in the shared home for the surviving spouse. Clergy are often aware of cases where a surviving unmarried partner is thrown out of his home when the heirs of his partner take possession of her property. So, if you have a conscientious objection to matrimony, and love one another, you need to see lawyers and accountants urgently! (Or emigrate to Scotland, where Common Law Marriage *does* have legal force.) Do you remember those delightful cartoons from the 1980s ~ "Love is ..." Well, Love is making a will, among other things! That may sound boring and unromantic, but love is a practical as well as an emotional thing.

But on that emotional side, obviously every marriage is itself rather than just a piece of statistics, but sociologists have looked at marriage and wellbeing and the last figures that I saw do suggest that this kind of committed mutual support is good for us! (Though you can always argue about what caused what) At its heart are the moral virtues of commitment and trust (with or without a tax break!) as well as emotion and delight. Giving and receiving in that context of mutual trusting does make us better people, and for that alone I would support marriage. But married or not, love includes the practical finances too.

Magpie ...

... does not, to be honest, hold any brief for the Pope, but did feel some sympathy for him when it came out that someone is wanting to have him arrested when he visits the UK later this year. The someones in question are Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, who are, you might say, the usual suspects. The allegation? ~ it relates to the possibility that his Holiness turned an official blind eye to child abuse in the USA. Frankly, this is not Dawkins' and Hitchens' business, for two reasons. 1. the alleged offence is not in British jurisdiction, so they are out of order, and 2. they are not personally aggrieved parties. No, as professional atheists they are gatecrashing on someone else's tragedy and pain in order to score a cheap point and gain some cheap publicity. They should be ashamed of themselves. If a genuine victim of priestly abuse wants to take some action, then perhaps that is a different matter.

... but as for the abuse scandal itself, it is sad and tragic. Our archbishop was simply being honest when he described the situation of the RC church in Ireland as loss of credibility ~ though that church may not like to hear it. In the Start the Week programme on Easter Monday he was asked about the matter, and he could scarcely pretend that it was trivial. Having been asked he could hardly duck the issue by saying it was another country, none of his business, but he did not criticise the RC church; he simply, and gently, recognised the mess it is in.

The church has handled the affair badly in the past, with more concern for its reputation than for the hurt of the victims. Nor is it being very sure-footed in its current response. To be fair, it is probably only within the past twenty-five years that anyone has really realised how this kind of offence ~ or pathology ~ is so unlikely to be sorted out by a rap over the knuckles and instruction not to do it again. And to be fair again, it is within the last twenty-five years that the ambulance-chasing lawyers have realised that there is profit to be gained from the paedophile pound, so for the church to admit to responsibility might be more costly than effectively healing. But also to be fair, many victims do say it is apology, not compensation, that they really want.

Even to write in this way may seem to be to minimise a serious and tragic experience for all too many people, and to skate over a deplorable attempt to hide a scandal. I do not

intend to do that ~ but it does seem as if there are other agendas in play here too.

On a happier note, the Booth Centre, which we have often supported through concerts and charitable giving at St. Wilfrid's, is fifteen years old. They are celebrating on 13th May. They reckon on 100 customers a week, and are supported by 500 organisations or individuals. Hundreds of homeless people have been helped off the streets and back into the community. Their co-ordinator, Amanda Croome, has written an article in the Cathedral's magazine for April, and the Rector has off-prints.

If you can say Eyjafjallajökull then you're a better bird than Magpie, Gunga Din. Try it after a few drinks, or even with your mouth full of dry biscuit, or marshmallow. If you know what it means, give yourself a brownie-point. (The -fjall- bit means fell, as in *Scafell*, I think) It all seemed a bit of a joke, at first. The skies above Britain silenced by a volcano in puny Iceland, ... and then above Europe. We enjoyed some peace, and the wall to wall blue sky with no vapour trails.

Then we began meeting neighbours who could not go on holiday, or got messages from friends who were stuck on the Continent. After a few days the joke turned sour, though the sense still remains that here we need some other long foreign words to convey the situation ~ *hubris* and *nemesis*, perhaps, or even *schadenfreude* (I can't even spell that right, and I haven't had a drink, or a mouthful of biscuit). Yes, a mighty industry is tamed, and a mighty continent paralysed. We are forced to realise how fragile all our technology is, and how dependent we are on the good-will of creation; how vulnerable to its foibles. Man is not entirely the master of his destiny, however much we seem to be in control ~ and we feel guilty for being glad that the skies are quiet. Our godless and masterful civilisation perhaps needs to feel powerless and guilty sometimes. If Magpie were a green bird he might even be asking how much we do need so much air travel and transport (but he is *pica pica*, not *pica viridis*)

But seriously, it is serious (and I do mean that) and the jobs of many people living in Northenden are at stake if airlines feel the pinch for too long, and there are hundreds of thousands of people who are stranded, with all the personal and family and economic and business problems that it genuinely means. But the sense of comic opera does still lurk beneath the surface.

Lords Mandelson and Adonis appear on the steps of Downing Street (will Clark Kent and Lois Lane be interviewing them?) The Navy may send a ship (but it only seems to have three) and Dunkirk is evoked. (And seriously, if I dare use the phrase again in earnest, a few people do seem to have used small boats to get across the channel. Now that *is* the Dunkirk spirit). And of course the airlines sent up their test aircraft to prove that it was all OK really. Do I detect a cloud of vested interests in the air? (If it was the Pope doing that, now, they'd all cry institutional cover-up, wouldn't they?) But perhaps it will all blow over soon ~ perhaps by the time Concord hits your doormats. Here's hoping ~ I think.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch (or rather back in Northenden). Did you notice the fine peppering of dust on cars and other smooth clean surfaces at times during the crisis ~ our own private dose of volcanic ash?

When you send text messages on a mobile phone you sometimes get "predictive text" kicking in, telling you what you want to say. Try Wilfrid. It will probably come out as "wild Sid."

Christian Aid Week. 9th – 15th May.

Christian Aid Week has come round again. I hope collectors from previous years will be able to help again, and if anyone else can help, please have a word with me.

Christian Aid Week is Britain's longest-running fundraising week and has been a firm fixture in the calendar of many thousands of people each year since 1957. It is famous for the distinctive envelope that drops through the letterboxes of millions of homes each May – and for the massive impact that the week has made in the fight to end the scandal of poverty around the world. This year the publicity for CAW focuses on slums in Kenya ~ though the money raised will be used across the whole range of their work.

For example, the publicity highlights people such as Catherine Nyaata, (pictured above) in the slums or informal settlements of Nairobi. There they have been given a significant boost as they try to work their way out of poverty. Thanks to Christian Aid partner organisation MNU, members of Catherine's community have been able to install five toilet and shower blocks. 'They have brought us more dignity. Previously there was none,' says Catherine.

No longer is this kind of work just a thing about rural hardship ~ if it ever was. Communities in an urban setting are as deprived as those in the countryside. Envelopes will also be available in church, if none comes through your door. If yours is not collected, you may leave it at the Rectory, or in church. I should add that all collectors should have a signed badge authenticating their role, which you can ask to see.

The organisation describes its work in this way. It believes that poverty is an outrage against human dignity, freedom and hope. Its vision is to end poverty. Its approach is three pronged: to fund long term development work; to respond to emergencies; and to challenge unjust systems which make and keep people poor.

Christian Aid is the official development agency of 41 of the churches in Britain and Ireland, and helps people of all faiths or none. It aims to empower people to find their own solutions to poverty, and works directly through *local* organisations in 48 countries ~ never through Governments, though it may challenge Governments to work on issues which create poverty, such as climate change, corporate tax evasion, or unfair international trade rules.

And it aims to be an efficient charity. 80% of its £94M income goes on its primary work (a creditable score, compared to many other charities), 19% on fundraising, and 1% on accountability. They split it down like this: 46% on long term development projects; 18% on emergencies, and 16% on campaigning, advocacy and education. Last year Northenden raised over £1,900. Let's see what we can manage this year!

There is more information for anyone who wants it on their website; [www . christianaid . org . uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)

Greg Forster

Two Christian Festivals.

You will know about Whitsun (I hope), which falls on 23rd May. You may not have heard of Rogationtide, which comes a week earlier. The first is a celebration of God's power at work in our lives today. The Holy Spirit not only came to the early followers of Jesus 1,980 years ago, but is here to enliven us now.

The second is a date we tend to forget in a world where bread comes in a plastic wrapper, and meat in a shrink-wrapped sachet. But our food is just as dependent on the goodness of

God in his creation as it was when the good folk of Northenden walked round their boundaries and prayed for a good harvest. We just don't get reminded of it quite so often ~ except perhaps when a volcano stops them flying in the strawberries from Ghana and whole villages lose their livelihoods. So now's a good time to be thinking about whether we should be more self-sufficient for our food in Britain, and whether it is right to expect far countries to grow special food for us, not staple food for themselves.

And how does the Holy Spirit come today? Perhaps as we let him work through our conscience to answer such questions ~ he is a conscience prodder at times; perhaps as our hearts are thrilled in worship, or stilled in prayer; perhaps as an argument gets resolved in forgiveness or we sense his guidance through a problem; perhaps as the beauty of a sunset warms our hearts; perhaps as we find one of his Gifts (I Cor. 12) at work in us and in our church; perhaps as we recognise his Fruit (Gal. 5) growing in our character, or in a friend's.

So both dates are times for us to pray for God's good gifts, and their wise use. To pray that the way our own trade and agriculture, and that of the wider world, is organised and regulated will offer secure supplies fairly and readily for all people. To pray that we in our churches may know the Spirit's guidance and reassurance, his strength and inspiration.