

S e p t e m b e r 2 0 0 7

Cover Picture; is based on Durer's famous praying hands – see page 10.

Prayer for the Month.

Lord Jesus, who taught your disciples to pray, guide and encourage us in our prayers, so that we may ask rightly, worship wholeheartedly, confess honestly and listen wisely;
for we ask on your authority. **Amen.**

Northenden Rectory, Ford Lane, 0161 998 – 2615

Dear Friends,

A couple of months ago the new Prime Minister suggested a rethink of the plans to create a Super-Casino in Manchester (or indeed anywhere, I think). There were squeals of rage from members of Manchester's City administration, speaking allegedly for "the people of Manchester". Well, here's one person of Manchester whose squeals were actually of delight. I have doubts about gambling in the first place. There seems something not quite right about money for nothing ~ either winning it, or giving it to a rich company which will keep a high proportion of what they take in, whatever their promises about pay-backs. And there is certainly cause for concern that those who do not have enough in the first place will squander what they do have on the long shot that they might win a jackpot ~ and get hooked on gaming in the process. It is an addiction which can harm your own health, and that of your family too.

But I have even deeper qualms about the arguments used to justify siting a casino in a deprived area on the grounds that it will act as a force for the regeneration of that area. I remember some years ago, when Manchester first began its bid for the Casino, that I met the Bishop of Hulme just after he had come from a meeting with City officials who had asked the local religious leaders ~ bishops, circuit superintendents, and imams ~ to back their bid, and who had been quite taken aback that these worthy gentlemen had rejected their request. Money! Jobs! Rebuilding! Weren't all these things what religious leaders would want for their people? And the bishop's reply? ~ that a good new school would be of greater benefit. A dead end job vacuuming up people's cast off betting slips will hardly renew the economy of Manchester.

Pushing money around, and seeing a fair percentage siphoned off as profits to the rich and faceless the other side of the globe, is a very dubious contribution to a real economy which should be about things people can use, benefits which bring them care, and activities which promote their health and wellbeing. Money should be a means of exchange for other things which are of true value, not a commodity in its own right to be pursued for its own sake. When it does become the commodity ~ whether in a casino or possibly, for some, in the "money market" ~ then there is something rotten in the state of Manchester.

"But what about raffles for charity or the church?" someone may object. I must admit that I am not completely happy with such things, particularly if the main activity or event going on to raise funds is "The Raffle." But I can see that for most people who are taking part in such things, it is almost a cover for giving cash, and the gambling and winning is a secondary matter. I am uneasy because it is the thin end of a wedge, but in itself it is not worth arguing about ~ though if the cause is really worth supporting, what is wrong with a straight donation?

An idea has been put forward that Northenden should have its own Parish Council. I made a mental note to comment on it in Concord when it was first mooted, but have not had the space or time since then. In turn the idea has been criticised on the grounds that such a council would be as comical as the Parochial Church Council of Dibley, in Dawn French's TV comedy series. Now the problems faced by the vicar of Dibley in working with her church council are one thing; they are the stuff of comedy, for a start ~ true enough to life to strike a chord, but overdrawn, so as to be comic ~ but they are the foibles of a church council, which is not the same as a civil Parish Council. To confuse the two is either a misunderstanding of the whole idea, or deliberate dis-information (or conceivably, a reporter's misplaced question).

So let me defend the vicar of Dibley! Her show is elected by members of a church electoral roll, or membership list. Its responsibility is to assist her (or not as the case may be!) in the mission of the church. That may include comment about social or moral issues in the ecclesiastical parish of Dibley (such as the conduct of members of the golf club), but it is not part of the Local Government structure. Its fundraising is entirely voluntary (and no doubt hilarious).

I am not familiar enough with the programme to know if there is also a civil Parish Council in Dibley, or even whether the

writers have themselves got muddled between the two. If there is a civil Parish Council, it will be elected by the whole adult population (if they bother to turn out), and it will have the power to levy a few pounds on the Council Tax, which it has the discretion to use for the benefit of the Parish (which may or may not coincide with an ecclesiastical parish.) It will have the paid services of a local government officer to execute its decisions. A friend of ours who is chairman of a civil Parish Council has described to me how (for instance) they have been able to meet one pressing concern in their neighbourhood by employing their own part time litter warden, whose services (if I have understood rightly) they can also contract out to Railtrack, so that public areas which are railway responsibility can also be cleaned. They have also facilitated a club for young people, and maintain a village hall. They are part of the statutory planning process, and their views are considered, and sometimes overridden ~ theirs is no magic bullet; they have no veto ~ when (say) a large new development will clog their narrow local lanes with traffic.

That is in a rural area, in which their civil parish is a clearly defined community of about 13,000. Whether the same set up would work for Northenden ~ the ward has about the same population, but is not so clearly separate (whatever we may like to think) from the neighbouring communities and wards ~ I do not know. Where district council and parish council respect each other and understand their common interests, even if they differ politically, the Parish Council can be a welcome voice for a community. In an atmosphere of political sniping I fear that a small Parish Council's views might be sidelined by a powerful central authority ~ but the idea should be considered for what it is, and not for what it is not !

Yours sincerely, Greg Forster

dawn (well, 8.00am to be precise) celebrations and swearing in in Exchange Square, Manchester, renewing their Promises on the centenary of the founding of Scouting. And one of the leaders of the group, Kim Hall, was not there, but actually at the centenary Jamboree down in Essex. For the record, some of the younger members had had their share of "camping" at a sleep-over in the church hall in mid-July. I can't imagine a harder floor to sleep on, but at least it was dry in there (I hope!).

Magpies sometimes get a reputation for taking things, but this time it's the squirrels. There is a notice in the waiting area at Manchester Crematorium advising people who want to take flowers on to somewhere else to do so quickly, because there are marauding squirrels who are eating the flowers. Industrial pepper dust is being tried to deter them, but without complete success, it seems.

... has recently met Tiggfried ~ or is it Tigglinda? ~ who is a most amiable hedgehog (correction, househog) who has taken up residence within the Rectory utility room, and can occasionally be caught moving bedding into his (her?) winter quarters under the cupboards, or enjoying a plate of cat food, or even (shhh!) leaving unmentionable trademarks in inaccessible places.

... has seen that there are plans afoot to integrate planning along a stretch of the Irwell through Salford, Manchester and Trafford, and to create pedestrian and cycle routes along the river through the area. This sounds splendid, though Magpie has one hesitation; the last time he was around there he met a kingfisher coming out of a lock. He hopes that the place will not be so sanitised and pedestrianised and tidied up in the interests of "bringing the countryside to your doorstep" that the wild and the wonderful untidiness of creation is squeezed out.

... has heard that there are special events going on around Wythenshawe Hall and Park on Heritage Open Days weekend (7-9 Sept.), including some archaeological walks. Watch out for details. There's digging starting there too on the 10th.

NEW DAWN COUNSELLING.

**Free, professional counselling
at the New Dawn Community Centre,
Button Lane, Northen Moor. Tel. 0161 – 962-8100.
*Counselling in a Christian context. .***

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 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.

Sept. 2 nd	10.30am	Family Communion
	6.30pm	United Evening Worship.
9 th	10.30am	Holy Communion
	6.30pm	Evening Worship
16 th	10.30am	Holy Communion
	6.30pm	Evening Worship
23 rd	10.30am	Holy Communion
	6.30pm	Evening Worship
29 th	10.30am	Morning Prayer
	6.30pm	Holy Communion
Oct. 7 th	10.30am	Harvest Festival Family Service
	6.30pm	United Service at Northenden Methodist Ch.

***The church is open each Sunday from 2.00– 5.00pm,
for prayer, visiting, enquiries, &c.***

There are a number of leaflets and booklets available which describe the church, or specific features within it. A leaflet about the Millennium Banner should be available from the end of August, and a revised booklet on the stained glass is in preparation.

SUNDAY CLUB, SCRAMBLERS ...

Both clubs have been closed over the summer, but ...

Scramblers reopens on 9th Sept., at 10.30am
and Sunday club on 23rd Sept.

IT'S ALL HAPPENING ... for your diaries

Sat. 1 st Sept.	Coffee Morning 10.00am ... Church Hall.
Mon. 3 rd	Women's Group 7.45pm ... (see below)
Sat. 8 th	Open Week-end (10.30 – 3.30pm) see panel
Sun. 9 th	Open Week-end (12.30 – 5.15pm) see panel.
Thu. 20 th	7.30pm Church Council ~ Church Hall (to be
Mon. 24 th	School Governors' Meeting. [confirmed)
Wed. 26 th	Bible Study; 7.45 for 8.00pm Rectory. (+ 3 rd)
Mon. 1 st Oct	Women's Group ~ see below
Thu. 4 th	Concert ~ see panel.
Sat. 6 th	Coffee Morning
Sun. 7 th	Harvest Lunch after 10.30am service ~ Invite yourself and your friends to both!
Thu. 11 th	Bishop's Visit. See article.

WOMEN'S GROUP meets in the Rectory

at **7.45 for 8 00pm** on ...

... **Monday Sept. 3rd**, in the Rectory;

Mr. John Ferguson (Chairman of Bramley [Hants] Parish Council)

Local Government Structures

(a timely explanation in the light of ideas for Northenden)

... on **Monday Oct. 1st**.

Peter and Dorothy Helm, of Boat Lane Court

"Magpie's Choice".

... and **Mon. 12th Nov. (n.b. date!)** *Ann Eustace*

Antarctic Adventure.

Sue

BISHOP'S VISIT AND GUEST WEEKENDS, Oct. 7TH - 14TH.

I think that the bishop wrote some months ago in Crux about his intention to visit every parish in the diocese, in a kind of "pilgrimage", to meet with, pray with and talk with people in the churches and in the parishes generally. On 11th October he visits Northenden in this journey of his. Some of his meetings and activities will be by invitation, but others, especially a service of dedication in church at 7pm or thereabouts (we still have to discuss the detailed plans) will be open to all. Invitations, both specific and general, will be prepared during this month.

We have also been invited to hold what was billed as a "Mission Weekend" at some time during the year, and it seemed

right to link this in with the bishop's visit to us. As this was discussed in the church council, the following pattern of events emerged; Sun. Oct. 7th is our harvest festival, and you are invited not only to come to the thanksgiving service yourself, but invite your friends and neighbours, and to stay on for the lunch which will follow. Invitations will be prepared for people to use. (Bring food for half a person – and your whole self!)

The bishop is here on the Thursday from about 4.00pm

The school's harvest celebrations have still to be confirmed ~ probably on 12th ~ but we intend to give special publicity to this.

Sat. 13th, & Sun 14th are already earmarked as "Open Days", linked in with St. Wilfrid's 'Day' on the Sunday. As usual, these provide a shop window for church, but I hope we can provide more elaborate "tours" of the whole church, not just the tower, highlighting (possibly with flowers) Christian features of the building and its history, and the reasons for them. As always there is an open invitation on such occasions, but this year we should arrange extra publicity via the school and a parish leaflet, and other means will be used to publicise it.

On Sun. 14th we shall have the St. Wilfrid's Day service at 10.30am. Once again there is as always an open invitation to this time of praise and thanksgiving to God, but special invitation cards and the parish leaflet will give it an extra focus.

And finally, at 6.30pm we plan to use a format similar to the much appreciated "God Friday" of last April ~ "God's Sunday" ~ to think about Harvest and the wonders and challenges of Creation. Once again, everyone is welcome, but specific invitations will bring this home.

If this is to be successful a lot will depend on church members' willingness to use specific personal invitations, even for events which are open to all and any. A leaflet should also go out round the parish at the beginning of October (Help, please!), and Concord will focus on all this in October. See you there!

Open Week-End ~ Heritage Open Days

Saturday 8th & Sunday 9th September

St. Wilfrid's Church will be open on Sat. 8th from 10.30 – 3.30pm and on Sun. 9th from 12.30 – 5.15pm as part of the nationwide "Heritage Open Days" programme.

Tower tours; historical and modern displays; ancestor hunting.

Maintaining our heritage?

We have a lot to be thankful for in our heritage, both architectural and personal, but it needs to be maintained for it to be of use now and for the future.

You may know that we recently approached English Heritage for a grant to continue our repairs and maintenance of the church slating, which has had no major overhaul since it was put on in 1875. They have now replied that they cannot help us, since we have a fair amount in the bank ourselves. That is fair comment, though without it we would not have income enough for routine small scale maintenance. So, what do we do now? ... probably some less ambitious work on the most urgent problems, ... but it is too early to say yet. G S F 21/8/07

From the Registers ...

In Memoriam ...

Mark Hanson (Stockport) 41, Malcolm Willcox (Lingard Rd.) 85,
Kathleen Blakeley (nee Leigh) 77.

Married ... in the parish church on ...

Sat. 28th July Rebecca Louise Sykes to James Peter Greatrex
Sun. 19th August;

Mary Patricia Windsor to William Ian Michael Roscoe

Baptised on Sunday, June 17th, 2007 ... !!!

Did you spot the unintended "deliberate mistake" of August's Concord? June 17th should have read July 15th, in the record of Logan Kilcourse's baptism. Sorry!

Concert by the Palatine Wind Quintet

on Thurs. 4th October
in St. Wilfrid's Church
at 7.30pm

light classical music, refreshments.

An excellent group with professional standards.

Adm. £

The quintet are based in Didsbury.

Details can be found on their website; www.palatinewq.co.uk
or on the church's site.

Harvest Festival ...

Though we are celebrating this at the beginning of October, let me make a few points about it. The first repeats a point I made last month; the harvest is not something we can take for granted, even though our wealth as a nation and the ease of global transport cushions us from the harshest realities of that fact.

Secondly, though thanksgiving is rightly central to our celebrations at a harvest festival, it is also appropriate to use it as a time to consider the glories of the whole of creation, and to reflect on its wonder and our use (or abuse) of it.

And thirdly, in connection with the way we celebrate it, ... One of the very proper ways of thanking God for what we have is to share it, and this is often done by bringing gifts to church at the harvest festival service. Very little of this is now distributed locally. We aim to support the work of the Booth Centre, which is the Cathedral's drop-in for Manchester's street people, and other similar centres; for them cup-a-soup packets, and similar quick and easy foods, which do not cause health-and-safety problems by requiring to be cooked, are most helpful.

Other uses of the harvest produce are bags of tins put ready for people whose benefit payments have been delayed or mis-assessed, or who have similar problems, or who just call at the Rectory door in the hope of some help. For these tins, which will keep round the year, are more use than perishables or loose goods and things with a brief sell-by date. And then again, there is the need of a wider world; donations to Christian Aid, or similar charities, are never wasted. We can provide envelopes on request.

So, I am grateful for the ways in which people show gratitude through generosity at harvest ~ but I am most grateful for gifts which will not go off within a week, but can be used to meet people's needs as and when they occur round the year.

Prayer

A couple of months ago I attended a meeting at which someone was talking about prayer. It was (you might say) thought provoking, and it provoked a number of sermons from me during July and August. This is the first month when I have had space and time to say something about it in Concord. What

was said was most thought provoking! ~ largely because it provoked a sense of unease in me. The things he left unsaid, and the things he denied or ridiculed, spoiled the positive points that he did make. So here are some of my reactions.

“God bless granny ... ” That may well be where a lot of us started in prayer, and the only thing wrong with that kind of praying, if we are still using it, is that it is not specific enough. As adults we can be more specific: “Lord, help gran to cope with her arthritis, ...” or more honest, perhaps, “Lord, help me to cope with gran’s moans about her arthritis, ...” or more in tune with gran’s world; “Lord, when we meet the care manager tomorrow with gran, help us to put over all her needs clearly and fairly.” If that is what you mean with “God bless gran”, go on using the phrase to put in a word for her with God.

There is nothing wrong, or sub-Christian or immature or unholy in asking for things in your prayers ~ for yourself and for other people. Jesus himself taught us to pray “give us today our bread for tomorrow, ...” There may well be a lot more to prayer than asking, but to leave it out leaves out something that Jesus taught as part of praying, and (see Luke’s gospel, ch.11) commented on specifically. Parents know how to give good things to their children, and so does our heavenly Father, even if the greatest good is his Spirit within us.

“Clear your mind of distractions.” I can see what he was getting at; you’ve struggled to make time for some prayer, to have a nice peaceful time with God, but things keep buzzing into your mind like diary reminders from your mobile phone. You feel you can’t turn them off, and can’t get away from them. But is the right reaction to get them out of your thoughts? Perhaps these are the things that you actually do need to bring before God. Tomorrow’s visit from gran’s care manager is not to be tucked away in the unholy cupboard of secular distractions interrupting your sweet communion, but lifted fair and square into God’s hands, so that once it is there you can move on in and with his presence.

Or the distraction may be something you feel is beneath God’s concern (or possibly beyond his approval, like recurring anger about how someone treated you.) Once again, here is something to put in his hands, even if we are a bit embarrassed about it (he knows already, you know!) And if we

say that we should be listening to God in our prayers, then this actually might be one way he is speaking; while we are trying to tidy the anger away into that cupboard of unwanted distractions, he is tapping us on the shoulder whispering, "now about that anger, ... we could sort it out, if you wanted."

So finally (for this month.) listening. The speaker threw this out as a one-liner; prayer should allow time to listen to God, not just talk to him or at him. He did not say how! So, how? If we are thinking about prayers in church at a regular service, then maybe words from the service will strike home as God highlights them in our mind: a phrase from that well-known hymn, or set prayer, or the bible reading, or even the sermon, or a whispered comment of encouragement at "the peace", perhaps. And in your personal prayers, I would suggest that to include reading the bible as part of your praying is one way of opening your ears to God's word in both "favourite" passages, and new explorations ~ but more on all this next month.

Some ideas for your praying ...

- Find the right time and place ~ in church, in the kitchen, on a walk You don't need to be rigid about this, but saying you can pray anytime, anywhere easily drifts into no time, nowhere.
- Be comfortable. Prayer is not the same as austerity ~ but not too comfy: you don't have to kneel.
- Focus on God. An visual or mental image may help, or a lighted candle, or a passage from the bible ~ so long as you look through it, rather than just at it or to it; you are approaching God first and foremost, not your inner self.
- Don't be afraid of intrusive thoughts. Turn them into subjects for prayer, then move on.
- You don't need posh words or words from a book ~ but sometimes they can help if you feel you don't know what to say, but find someone else has said it for you.
- A framework may help, whether it is the words of the Prayer Book, or a checklist-acronym like ACTS – Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.
- And allow time to listen; the words a prayer may provoke a thought, or the text of a bible passage may spring out at you, because bible reading should be a part of prayer.