

2 0 ~ ~ A p r i l ~ ~ 0 9

Prayer for the Month.

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

Through Jesus Christ himself, our Lord and Saviour,
Amen.

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the April edition of Concord. Let me begin by wishing you all a happy, and blessed, Easter. This month we naturally look at the Easter story.

The world's finances are hitting the headlines for all the wrong reasons nowadays. What light does Christian teaching shed on what has gone wrong, and what might go right? In particular, what does it say about when money becomes a commodity in its own right, rather than a means of exchange?

Christian Aid Week is coming soon. What can you do for it?

Oh, and have you made a note of all the events happening during the month? Two specials before Easter, intended to help us appreciate more what God has done for us through Jesus' death and resurrection, and then on 23rd you are invited to celebrate St. George's day by attending a concert of classical and dance music, given by the Palatine Wind Quintet. And for St. Wilfrid's people there is the annual meeting, after the morning service on 19th. See you there!

And much else, ... So now read on.

Yours faithfully,

Greg Forster

Christian Aid Week ...

... this year runs from May 10th to 16th. Their theme is "Keeping Hope Alive", and they focus in the publicity on work in the Democratic Republic of Congo ~ though money raised during "the week" goes to making a positive and lasting difference to poor communities not only there but around the world. Funds are usually channelled through local groups, such as churches, who know local needs and keep funds where they belong.

Christian Aid magazines, DVDs and other materials are available in Church for you to browse or borrow. Help yourself!

Volunteers are needed to collect in many streets around the village ~ we hope last year's volunteers can take on the same streets again, but let the Rector or June Phillipson know if you can't, or if you can take on this role as a new collector.

Last year we raised in the region of £2,200 in the village, if I remember rightly. Can we beat that this year, despite the economic woes we hear so much about? Those woes strike the poor communities in the third world harder than they do us!

G.S.F.

Thanks–Giving.

Many of you will know that at St. Wilfrid's we regularly give to missions and charities, as part of our service of care to the wider community, and our way of saying thank-you to God for his gifts to us. Some of our gifts are to well known causes ~ to Christian Aid for work in D. R. Congo, for instance. Recently, however, we gave to Fauconi Hope. It is a small group trying to develop an understanding and a cure for a rare form of leukaemia and our link is that the grandson of one of our members is a sufferer ~ if you want more information, ask me. Greg Forster



THE FINANCIAL SITUATION ...

JUSTICE AND INTEGRITY

It is impossible nowadays to open a paper or listen to a news broadcast without some mention of downturns, banking crises, depressions and the like. I do not relish it, though it seems to be a fact of life that we cannot avoid. For a great many people it means hardship ~ though for some, especially perhaps those on tracker mortgages, there is a brighter side.

The fact that some of the hardship falls heaviest on the less well off adds a sense of injustice. So too does the fact that people, whose businesses would in normal circumstances be considered well run and prudent in their budgeting, are penalised and have their working loans foreclosed by banks which would themselves be foreclosed but for massive loans. I am reminded of the story Jesus told of the man whose massive debt was remitted, only to go out and wring a piffling sum out of a colleague ~ though he told the story to indicate the extent of God's forgiveness, and how we should copy it, rather than to tell us how to run finance. (Though the lesson would not go amiss! Perhaps it should apply to financial relationships as well as our moral consciences.)

I am in two minds whether to view what is happening as God's judgment, or God's mercy ~ or even both, since there are lessons in the bible which show God intervening in a way which seems like punishment in order to restrain a greater evil: the tower of Babel in the story comes crashing down to prevent mankind overreaching itself and assailing God.

If it is mercy, then it represents a restraint on our unrestrained exploitation of the world's finite resources. We have idolised economic growth, and promised ourselves more and more material goods and experiences, as if the raw materials were inexhaustible, the fuel would never run dry, and the waste would disappear into thin air. This is not just China, half a world away and basking in economic growth of 10% per year, but Manchester, planning its

THE FINANCIAL SITUATION



Cover Feature



next 20 years blithely on the basis of continued expansion, and its airport on the basis of increased travel and growing demand; and you and me, dreaming perhaps of our next purchase, or home improvement.

Perhaps this mercy will hurt, but it may save us or our children from harsher consequences. Thus the remedy we need to look for from our political and economic leaders is not some financial fix that will enable business as usual to be resumed as soon as possible, but a system which provides for the needs (but not the greed) of a growing world population without destroying the world in the process. An economic downturn might just give us some breathing space to do this and force those of us who have been greedy to downsize a bit ~ to create a "steady state economics" ~ but that is a bigger task than what seems to be on this month's agenda.

And if what we are going through is a judgment, what is being judged? I would suggest there are two things which have been particularly wrong, both economically and morally, in our financial systems of late. One is that money, along with "financial instruments" whatever they may be, is being treated as a commodity in its own right, rather than as a means of exchange. The other is that trade and business has been based too much on consumer debt, rather than capital.

That is getting rather technical, I know, but I will try to explain. If I buy £1,000 worth of Euros because I intend to go to France, or buy some goods from Spain to sell here, that is a fair transaction. But if I buy those €1,100 on the gamble that in a few weeks' time the pound will have lost value, and I will sell them back for £1,100, not £1,000, that contributes no added value to anyone or anything, and may well be at the cost of someone else's loss. It is money itself, rather than Spanish goods or my French trip, that has been the purpose of my dealing, and I have been exploiting events rather than creating wealth or worth. I know that there are arguments that such trading evens out a bumpy market and keeps money available, and that I might only have got back £900 so the risk made it all fair ~ but



Cover Feature



THE FINANCIAL SITUATION ... JUSTICE AND INTEGRITY

it also encourages speculation and ~ add a few noughts ~ even the manipulation of markets. In treating money as an end in itself the world we are in has departed from the Christian view of it as a means of funding or rewarding creative work and exchange. It has become our world's idol, and is now claiming its pound of flesh.

And debt ...? When I mentioned this a couple of months ago in Concord, and coined the word "debtism" as an alternative to capitalism to describe our system, it happened to coincide with our government's decision to borrow vast sums to fund its way out of the recession. Some people complained about that perceived criticism. Whether it is sound for the State to get out of today's problems by borrowing from the future is not an argument I intended to get into then, nor do I intend to now. I certainly didn't intend to comment on that decision then.

What has troubled me is that so, so many people were, and are, borrowing from their own future and building up more debt than they can reasonably repay ~ and that the banks then were encouraging this with advertising campaigns and unsolicited letters offering loans to "take the waiting out of wanting". (Now there's an old slogan for you! From the 1980s.) Not only was it burdening individuals with debt ~ often at usuriously high rates of interest (I notice that at least one credit card is currently charging over 25% per annum) ~ but it meant that industry and trade, and hence tax revenue and Government spending too, were being financed not from real capital created in the past or from real current income, but from imaginary and hoped for wealth yet to be generated and earned ~ a bubble of unsecured debt. It might look good on a credit balance sheet, but!

In mediaeval and early modern Christian thinking borrowing which enabled the creation of new wealth was allowable if not entirely good, whereas borrowing simply to spend on unneeded items was barren, dead and wrong. We have forgotten that distinction, and the bubble is bursting.

Three short pages are not enough to do this matter justice but only to raise some questions. They are questions, however, in God's moral world, not in some amoral, neutral realm where

at St. Wilfrid's Church
Ford Lane, Northenden, M22 4 WE.

By the Palatine Wind Quintet

Thursday April 23rd

7.30pm. Refreshments.

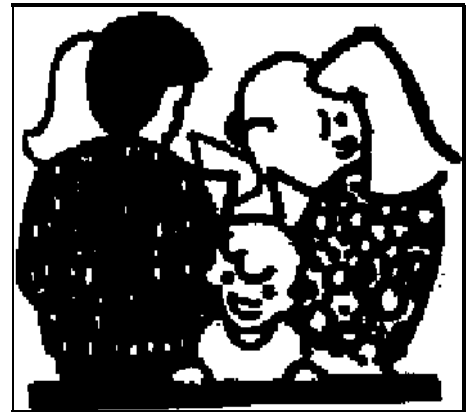
St. Wilfrid's Church,

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.

April 5th 10.30am Morning Worship ~ Passion Sunday.
("Standard" ~ i.e., no parade)

6.30pm United Service @ Northenden Methodist Ch.

Maundy Thursday ~ Morning Communion at 10am as usual.
Evening Service at Northenden Methodist Church.

Good Friday, 10th Apr. 10.30am Readings and Hymns

Easter Day, 12th April. 8.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Easter Family Service

6.30pm Evening worship.

April 19th 10.30am Morning Worship (Shortened)

Followed by the Church's Annual Meeting

6.30pm Evening Worship

April 25 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
	6.30pm	Evening Worship
May 3 rd	10.30am	Family Service (no parade)
	6.30pm	United Evening Worship

And extras ... Weds. 1st April, 8.00pm in Church ...
you are invited to Experience Easter.

And on Good Friday evening, 7.30pm ...
God Friday ~ a visual and audio-meditation

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 ...

Note the two "Easter" events ~ see the panel for details ~
an invitation to "Experience Easter" on Wed. April 1st at 8.00pm
in church,
and a modified repeat of the "God Friday" meditation on Good
Friday, 10th April also in Church at 7.30pm.
These are intended as open, invitation events, and invitation
cards will be available.

Mon. 6th April 7.45 for 8.00pm Women's Group in the Rectory

Thurs. 9th April, 9.15am (ish) School Easter Service in church.

Church Annual Meeting Sun. 19th, 11.30am.

Weds. 22nd & 29th April Bible Studies in the Rectory, 8.00pm

Thurs. 23rd Concert in Church 7.30pm

Sat. 25th Coffee Morning in Church Hall, 10.00am ...

PCC Meeting to be arranged.

Mon. 4th May Women's Group ~ yet another birthday!

And even further ahead ... The Archdeacon's Visitation!

Would wardens and sidesmen please book the evening of
14th May, for this event, to be held as usual in Stretford.

And a Folk Concert is planned for May 28th ~ details to follow.

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 April and May, despite bank holidays and the like!

FROM THE REGISTERS;

Baptised, on Sunday 15th March 2009.

Ryan Leonard Young

IN MEMORIAM ...

John "Happy" Renshaw (Offerton) 77.

Celebrating Easter ...

Can I invite you, and your friends, to special two events marking Easter. The first is on April the first ~ but is no joke! ~ and the second is on the tenth, Good Friday.

What does Easter mean? The story of what Jesus went through in what we call Holy Week, and then Easter Day, touches us in many ways. We see hope and elation, we see anger and justice, we see longing and loneliness, desertion and pain, utter loss and total triumph. On the evening of 1st April you are invited to Experience these varied emotions of Easter, as we move round the church to various displays ~ I hesitate to call them shrines, but that might tell you more what they will be like ~ where we can think a while and see how Christ's experience touches and helps and perhaps heals our own. There will be half a dozen points, and I anticipate that our short pilgrimage will take a little over an hour.

Two years ago we used some art, music and dramatic pictures, supplied from the diocese, to think through the meaning of Good Friday. The event was called God Friday. Those who came found it a moving, touching and uplifting experience. We hope to repeat this on Good Friday this year, with a partly different set of pictures and words. Again, the meditation will last a little over an hour.

Please join us yourself, and feel free to bring friends or neighbours, or someone else from the family. Invitation cards, posters and fliers are available.

Greg Forster

St. Wilfrid's Church ~ Annual Meeting

This meeting will take place at about 11.30am on Sun. 19th April. Can I encourage all members of the Electoral Roll of the church to join us for the meeting. We shall hear reports on the state of our buildings, and the state of our finances; you are invited to nominate candidates for election as Churchwardens and sidesmen, and to the PCC. Nomination papers will be available in church from early April. Can I also invite people who are not on the electoral roll ~ the church's membership list ~ but who wish to take part in the governance of the church to sign up as soon as possible. Application forms are in church, or can be obtained from the Rector of Mrs. Eglon, our electoral roll officer.

As you will know we have undertaken some significant work on the church roof this past year, and that has itself made significant inroads into our financial reserves. We were turned down when we applied for a grant from English Heritage to do this work on a building which they have "listed" as important, on the grounds that we had too much in our reserves for them to make a grant!

However, quite apart from that, we are running a large deficit, which we have managed for a year or two, but cannot do so much longer. I may give a breakdown of our accounts next month, for you all to see, or write to all members.

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,

Magpie ...

... was not sure last month where the name Barack comes from, and no-one has enlightened him, but as for Obama, that notorious final of University Challenge, won in the end by Manchester on a technicality, threw up a quirky insight; reverse

the letters of Obama and you have the future tense of the Latin verb for I love, amabo.

... heard that when a coachload of councillors visited the village to look into the planning application for yet another take-away they were shocked at the number of closed roller-shutters closing off our shops and restaurants at 11.00 in the morning. It seems to have made them think again, since they have deferred their decision for further investigation, at least.

... so what would you do with the shutters, Magpie wonders? Remove them (and push insurance charges sky high)? Make them be opened at normal shop opening hours (and who would turn out to do it)? Paint them all with colourful designs, reflecting the business behind them, and co-ordinated throughout the village? That would be an exciting piece of public art, wouldn't it? Who would vet the design? Who would pay?

... has heard discouraging noises from the chairman of Railtrack about the idea of a station on Northenden's rail line ~ someone else must pay for it, and do the train operators and the public want it? No reason to stop asking, though! You know it makes sense.

... St. Wilfrid's School has a "prayer wall" on which children can stick post-it notes with prayers on. There are quite a number, one of which is simply "Thank you God for love and vegetables." There's a thought!

... watched a dog being toileted the other day, like you do. Its human then looked around for a suitable plastic bag to remove the product. There were several likely ones lying around in the hedge ~ but it turned out that they were all bags which had been used for a similar purpose, and then dumped on the spot! Now, is that really what the clean up campaign is for?

... heard that St. Wilfrid's School has recently been OfSTEDed. While there were certain features of the inspection itself which were in need of improvement ~ they failed to note last year's science and maths results, 8-10% better than national average, for instance ~ they did recognise that in eighteen out of the 33 boxes they had to tick the school rated Good. The fifteen others, at satisfactory, were just that: meeting what is normally required. The education establishment loves acronyms, and SIAS is another ~ statutory inspection of Anglican schools. St. Wilfrid's

was SIASed a week or so after the OfSTED inspection, and was rated Good in all points of that inspection of our church links.

Easter ~ life and hope

I have been wondering for a week or so, as I thought of what to write here, what new I could say about Easter ~ but then it occurred to me that it is the old truths about Easter that matter, not some new twist to the tale. It is the story of a definite event ~ Christ was executed on a Roman cross and then against all odds and expectations rose to new life ~ and then an understanding of what that means for us.

St.Paul puts it this way: "Christ died for our sins and rose again for our Justification." He died because of where we have gone wrong, and was raised to new life because we have been put right.

Sin does matter ~ and sin is a wrong attitude towards God and wrong relationships towards one another; we break faith with our generous creator and with the people around us. If you like to think of breaking rules, OK, but remember that rules are there for their own sake, but to point to God and protect you and me and the world. What was happening as Christ died was that he was taking the consequences of all that broken faith, some of it very up close and personal at the time, and some of it more distant as we turn to him, and ask him to lift those consequences from us. Without that the barriers would still be up, since God cannot ignore the hurts we do to each other.

But sin is not the last word. We have a sure hope that it can be forgiven, and we have a sure hope that it will not keep us from God, and the destiny he intends for us of sharing a glorious eternity with him. Christ was raised from among the dead to a new and fuller life, with none of the limitations we know in this life. Not least this demonstrates that God accepts and endorses what he was doing in bearing our sin: he was raised to show that we are put right with God. So how do we benefit from this? We acknowledge our need of forgiveness, trust that Christ's death is what puts us right, and commit ourselves to him.